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ABSTRACT

This research describes strategies used to improve student achievement in a foreign language class through the use of effective study skills. The targeted population included high school students in a first year foreign language class. Evidence for the problem of low achievement came from teacher observations, student surveys, and low assessment scores. Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students were not successful in their classes due in large part to their lack of effective study skills. Students also did not know what learning strategies to use for specific tasks and chose ineffective learning strategies to help them learn the language. A review of solution strategies confirmed that students needed to receive instruction on effective language learning strategies during regular class instruction, with the teacher best suited to providing this instruction. Strategies included ones that addressed all areas of language learning (vocabulary, reading, writing, listening, and speaking). Over several months, students received instruction in the strategies, wrote in their journals, and completed surveys. Results showed that students were able to use the language learning strategies to achieve higher success. Students reported feeling more comfortable with the various aspects of language learning when using these language learning strategies. Language learning strategies questionnaire is appended. (Contains 17 references.) (SM)

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DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE STUDY SKILLS WHILE STUDYING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Amanda Rybicki

An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & SkyLight

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Chicago, Illinois

May 2002

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Title: Developing Effective Study Skills While Studying a Foreign Language

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Date: May 2002

Abstract

This research described strategies used to improve student achievement in a foreign language class through the use of effective study skills. The targeted population consisted of students in a first year foreign language class from a suburban community located in the Midwest. Evidence for the existence of this problem included teacher observations, student surveys, and lack of achievement shown on assessments.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students did not experience success in their classes due in large to their lack of effective study skills. Educators have observed that students have not been formally taught learning strategies and students choose not to engage in learning strategies used in class. Students also did not know what learning strategies to use for specific tasks and chose ineffective learning strategies to help them learn the language.

A review of solution strategies confirmed that students need to receive instruction on effective language learning strategies during regular class instruction. The teacher is best suited to teach students effective language learning strategies to achieve success. The strategies that have proven successful are those that address all areas of language learning: vocabulary, reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

The results of this research showed that students were able to use the language learning strategies taught in class, and they reported favorable results with the use of them. Students also reported that they felt more comfortable with the various aspects of language learning through the use of these language learning strategies. The researcher recommends that students continuously receive instruction of language learning strategies and students monitor their progress through a metacognitive approach.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

Problem Statement

Students of the targeted high school foreign language classes demonstrated poor study skills that inhibited their ability to achieve success in a foreign language class. Evidence for the existence of the problem included student surveys, teacher and student journal entries, and assessments that indicated the level of student academic performance.

Immediate Problem Context

The targeted high school was located in a growing community in a suburb outside a large midwestern city. The school housed 4,682 students of which 94.5% were Caucasian, 0.7% were African American, 3.1% were Hispanic, 1.3% were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.4% were Native American. Amongst the student population 1.7% came from low-income backgrounds and 0.0% came from limited-English proficiency families. The targeted school had a 95% attendance rate, 2.4% student dropouts, and 8.1% mobility, and 0.1% chronic truancy.

The targeted school employed 241 teachers. The average class size was 21.8 students. The average teacher had been teaching for 14.2 years. Of all the

school's teachers 32.4% had received a Bachelor's degree and 67.6% had received a Master's degree.

The targeted school spent $6,970 per pupil resulting in having the third lowest percentile for per pupil expenditure for the state. The ACT exam was taken by 66.9% of the school's students. The students who took the exam received a composite score of 22.7, which placed the targeted school in the top 12% of high schools in the city's six county area. The school had a graduation rate of 92.4%.

The targeted school offered a variety of extracurricular and academic programs for its students. Students had the opportunity to enroll in remedial, regular, and advanced placement programs in most academic subjects. The targeted school provided an extensive athletic program as well as offered various extracurricular opportunities.

The targeted school completed a large expansion project in response to the population growth in the community. The school confronted many issues regarding availability of facilities for classes and extra curricular programs due to growing enrollment and increased student interest. Additional concerns included employing a sufficient amount of teachers and assigning sponsors to the many organizations and athletic activities.

The Surrounding Community

The targeted school was located in a suburb 36 miles southwest of a large midwestern city covering 10 square miles. Historically the community was known as a farming community when settling began in the middle 1800's. Eventually

the community became known as a railroad community before being incorporated in the village in 1946. Since then the community has had a large population increase. The community was known as an area that would offer the accessibility to the large city while it provided the luxuries of a quiet and peaceful suburb. According to the 2000 Census approximately 17,500 people resided in the community comprising 5,167 households.

It was estimated that each year builders constructed 300 new homes. The community provided residents with 15 churches, 18 parks, a golf course, and several sports fields for all ages. The most attractive feature of the community was the acclaim and reputation of the schools. The community provided 5 elementary, 3 middle, 1 junior high, and 2 senior high schools. Community members also had access to 4 post secondary institutions in the neighboring communities.

The community has faced several issues regarding the targeted school and the population growth. In 1997 the community voted in favor of a referendum to provide for additional classrooms, an auditorium, and swimming pools meeting the targeted school's needs. The school received an average of 250 new students every year that moved into the district that were not accounted for by the feeder school's enrollment. The population growth caused the community to face high tax structures to fund the additional costs of the targeted school. The community has always been supportive in providing the targeted school with what it needed, but as the high tax structures have been increasing it is becoming an issue for most residents.

National Context of the Problem

A foreign language class is a very demanding and rigorous course of study. In order to ensure success students must be committed to learning right from the start. Foreign language proficiency requires the recall of several words, phrases, verbs, and grammatical structures. Studying a foreign language requires students to engage in certain learning strategies that they may not have to utilize in other academic subjects.

In the beginning stages of their course of study students find that they can master the material quite easily, but as the class progresses and the amount of material for which they are responsible increases, many students become overwhelmed and fail to engage in productive learning strategies that will enhance their learning. They consequently fail to prepare themselves sufficiently for homework, exams, and in class activities. Students lack specific learning strategies to employ in and outside of class to promote their proficiency in the target language. Teachers assume that students know how to prepare for assignments when in actuality they do not. According to Oxford (1989), teachers do not discuss language learning strategies often, and the incorporation of these strategies may greatly influence the grade and success of learning a second language.

Although many instructors have not addressed language learning strategies there is evidence suggesting that it will benefit students. According to Oxford (Oxford et al., 1990) language learning strategies can often dramatically enable learners to achieve better proficiency by making the learning experience

easier, more productive, and more personal. Since students lack the skills it is imperative that the teachers instruct students how to learn the language in a more effective manner, and how to deal with the overwhelming amount of language they receive. Part of the instruction requires teachers to help students organize the information in a manner best suited for their individual learning style.

The difference between successful and unsuccessful language learners may be the manner in which they practice learning strategies. All students have designed their own personal habits and ritual for studying and completing assigned activities, but some prove to be more effective than others. According to Chamot and Kupper (1989), effective language learners recognize how to use suitable strategies to achieve learning goals, whereas ineffective language learners are less adept in their plan choice and use.

Instructing students on specific language learning strategies should be a natural part of the foreign language class. It is feasible to incorporate these strategies within the regular course curriculum to enhance learning. According to Chamot (1993), teachers view learning strategy instruction as a separate part of their class curriculum, but it is possible to incorporate the instruction of learning strategies in their classes. Perhaps this continues to be a concern due to the fact that many teachers do not perceive this as an integral part of their classroom repertoire.

Chapter 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

In order to document unsuccessful academic achievement for students in a foreign language class due to a lack of study skills the teacher administered a survey. The survey determined the students' knowledge and application of study skills related to learning vocabulary, reading, listening, and writing skills.

Within the first month the teacher documented the students' knowledge of study skill strategies available to them as they take a foreign language class. The students completed the surveys regarding their knowledge and use of learning strategies for a foreign language class (Appendix A). The teacher documented students' assessment scores for chapter quizzes and tests. The teacher also documented observations of students using strategies in class.

The surveys indicated that students felt confident using some language learning strategies and insecure about others. The survey demonstrated the need to improve language learning strategies in all areas where students indicated a need. The teacher journal entries verified that students need instruction on language learning strategies. The teacher journal entries reported that while there were students who used language learning strategies there was

a need to provide instruction to students who were not knowledgeable of these strategies. It was also documented that students in a first year foreign language class may not realize that they need to learn specific skills to use while learning a language.

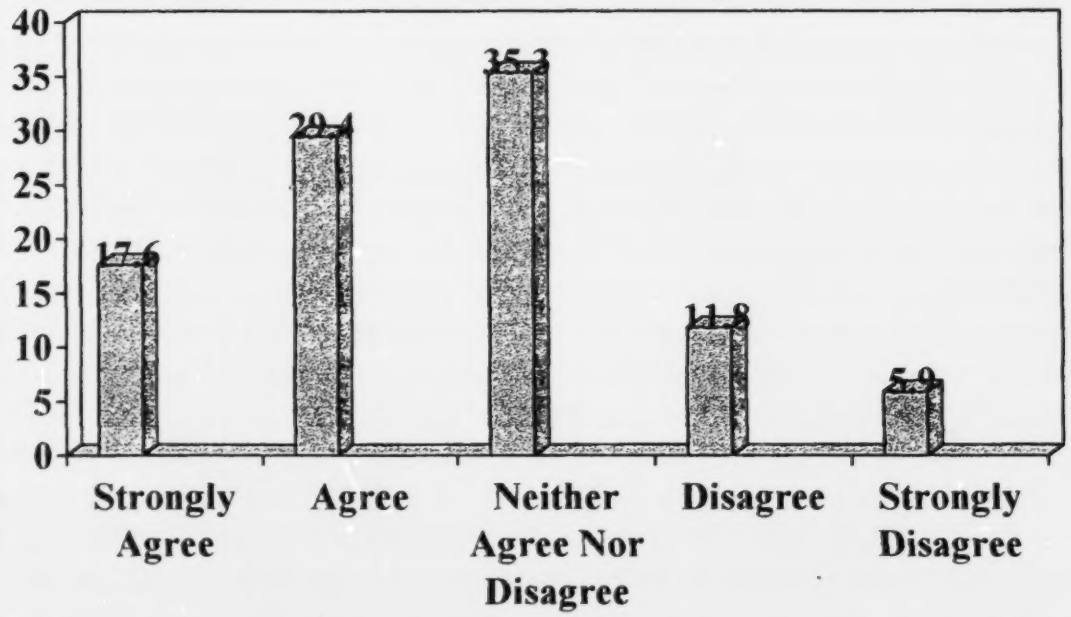

Figure 1. Percentage of the targeted students who understood the format of their textbook, could find the information they needed, and had an idea of what they will learn this year.

The teacher administered this survey question during school hours. The responses were given by marking a number from a Likert scale ranging from numbers 1 to 5. The survey indicated that 17.6% of the students stated that they strongly agreed to the statement that they did understand the format of their text, could find information needed, and did have an idea of what they would

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study during the school year. Approximately 29% percent agreed with this statement while 35.3% neither agreed nor disagreed. Almost 12% disagreed with this statement ,and 5.9% strongly disagreed with this statement.

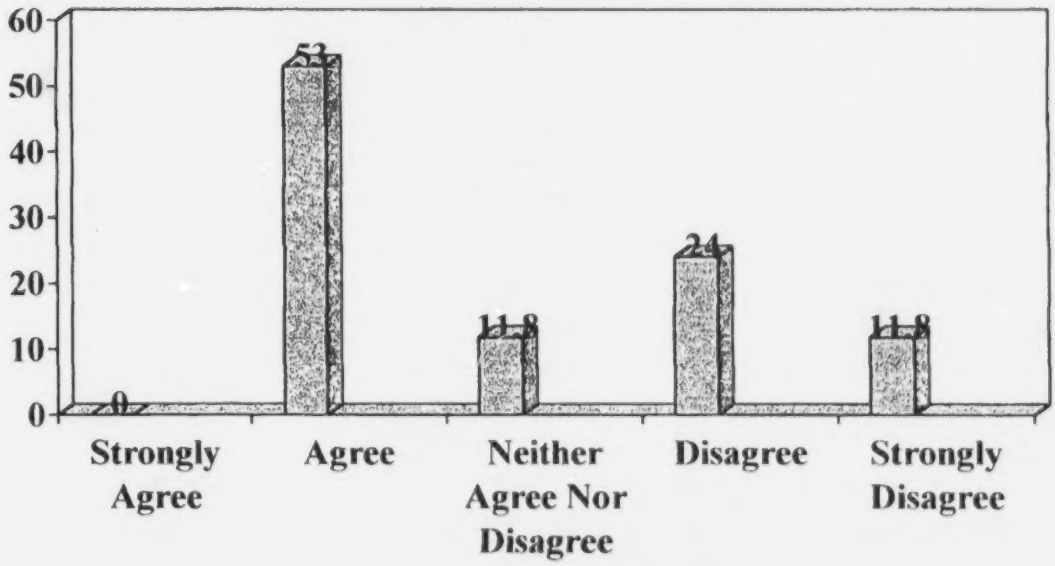

Figure 2. Percentage of targeted students who studied their vocabulary outside of class and had different ways to review the words.

None of the students indicated that they strongly agreed to the statement that they studied their vocabulary outside of class and had different ways to review the words. Fifty-three percent of the students agreed with this statement while 11.8% of the students neither agreed nor disagreed. Twenty-four percent of the students disagreed while 11.8% strongly disagreed.

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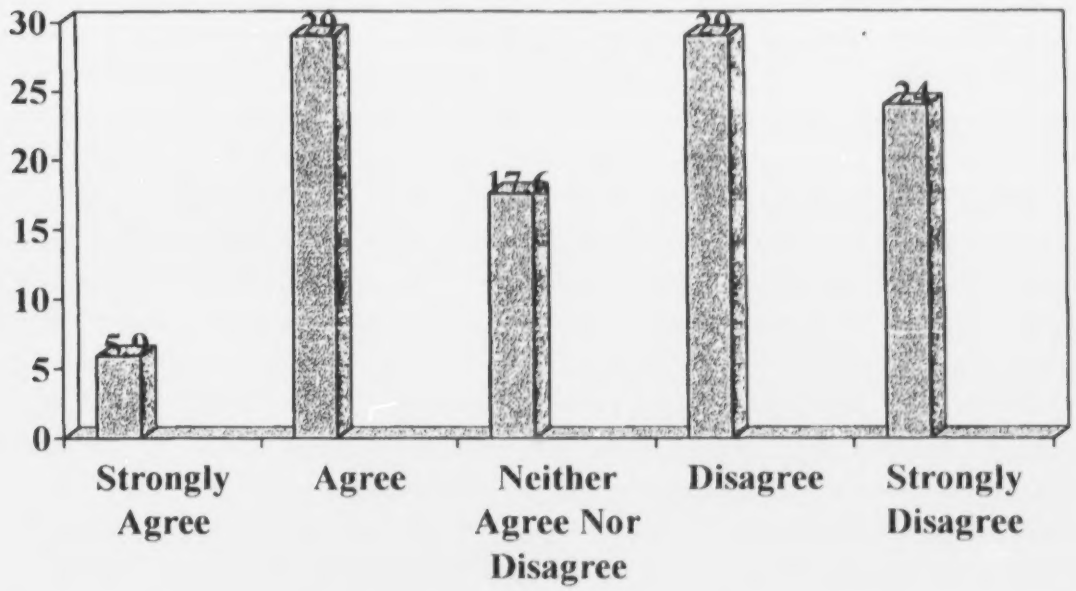

Figure 3. Percentage of the targeted students who indicated that they believe knowing English would help them understand Spanish better.

The survey showed that 5.9% of the students stated that they strongly believed that knowing English would help them understand Spanish better while 29% agreed with this statement. Almost 18% percent of the students neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement while 29% of the students disagreed with this statement. Twenty-four percent of the students strongly disagreed with this belief.

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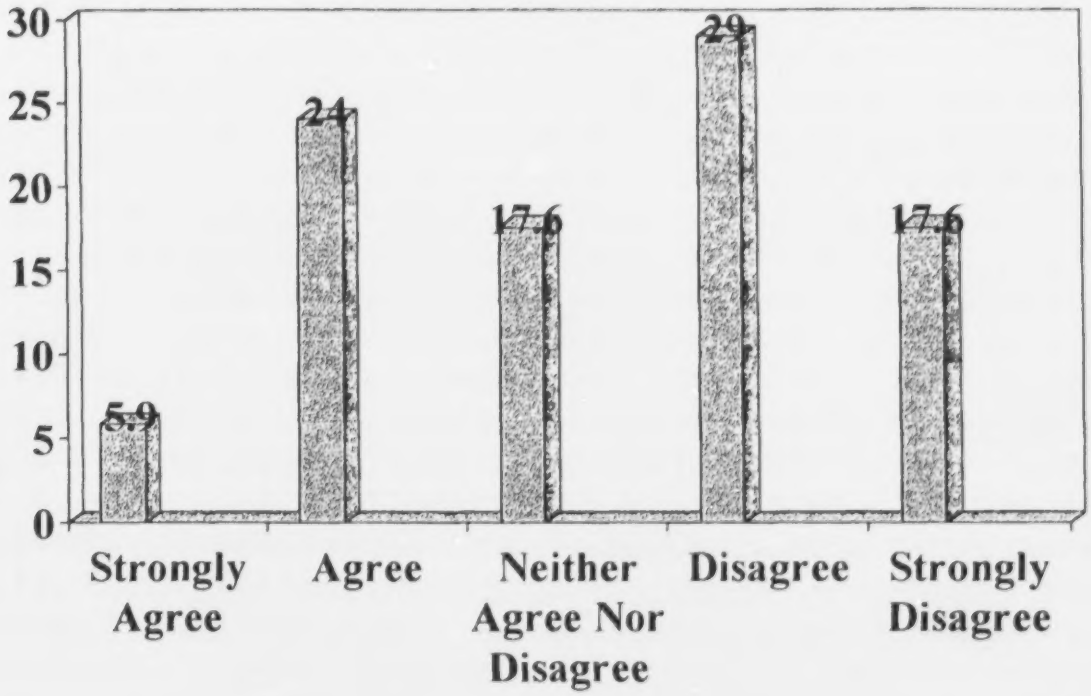

Figure 4. Percentage of targeted students who believed that reading in Spanish would be easy because they knew strategies that would simplify the task.

The survey indicated that 5.9% of the targeted students strongly agreed that reading in Spanish would be easy because they knew strategies that would simplify the task while a larger number, 24%, agreed to this statement. The same of number of students who indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed also strongly disagreed with this belief. Almost 18% of the students indicated these responses. The largest number of students, 29%, reported that they disagreed with this statement.

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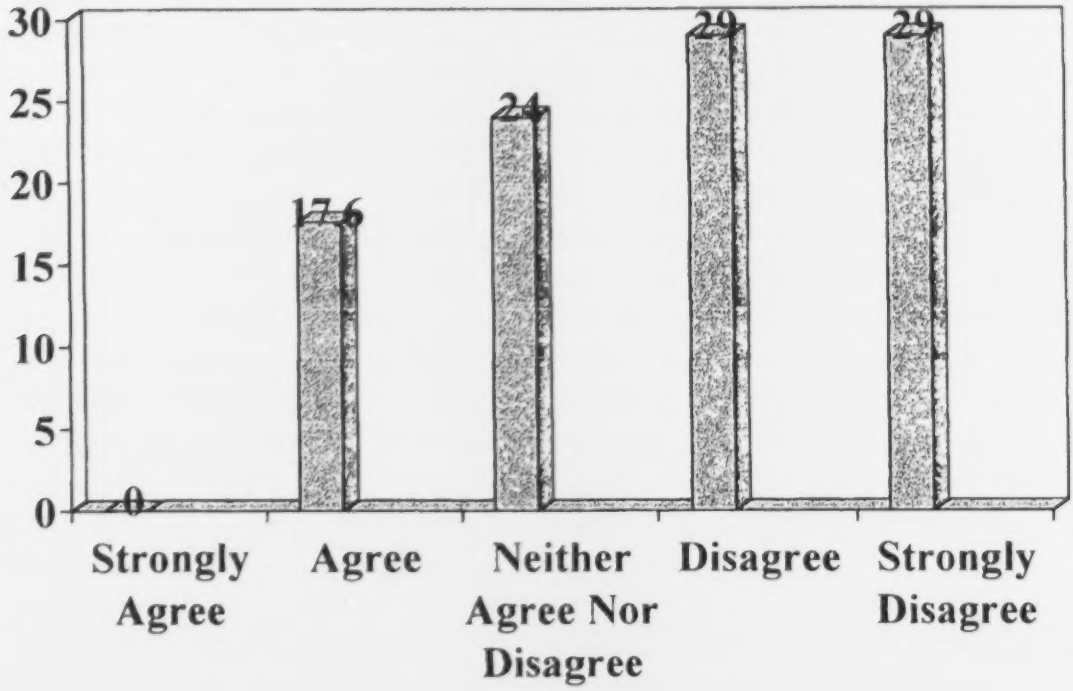

Figure 5. Percentage of students who felt comfortable listening to Spanish and answering questions based on what they heard.

None of the students indicated that they strongly agreed that they felt comfortable listening to Spanish and answering questions based on what they heard. There were 17.6% of the students who indicated that they agreed with the statement while 24% neither agreed nor disagreed. The largest number of students reported that they disagreed and strongly disagreed with this idea. Twenty-nine percent of the students equally reported that they disagreed and strongly disagreed.

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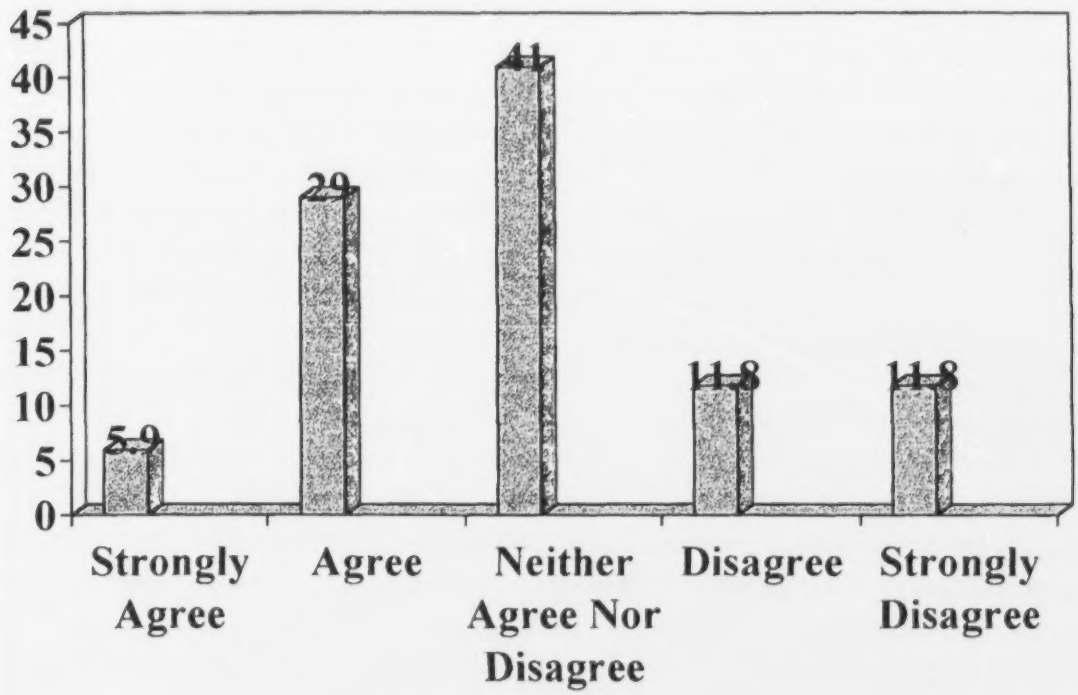

Figure 6. Percentage of students who stated that when they listened to Spanish they could filter out information they needed to listen.

Only 5.9% of the students strongly agreed that they could filter out information that they needed to listen for while listening to Spanish. A larger number, 29%, agreed that they could accomplish this task. The largest number of students indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. Forty-one percent of the students neither agreed nor disagreed. The same number of students indicated that they disagreed and strongly disagreed that they could do this task. There were 11.8% of the students disagreed and strongly disagreed with this idea.

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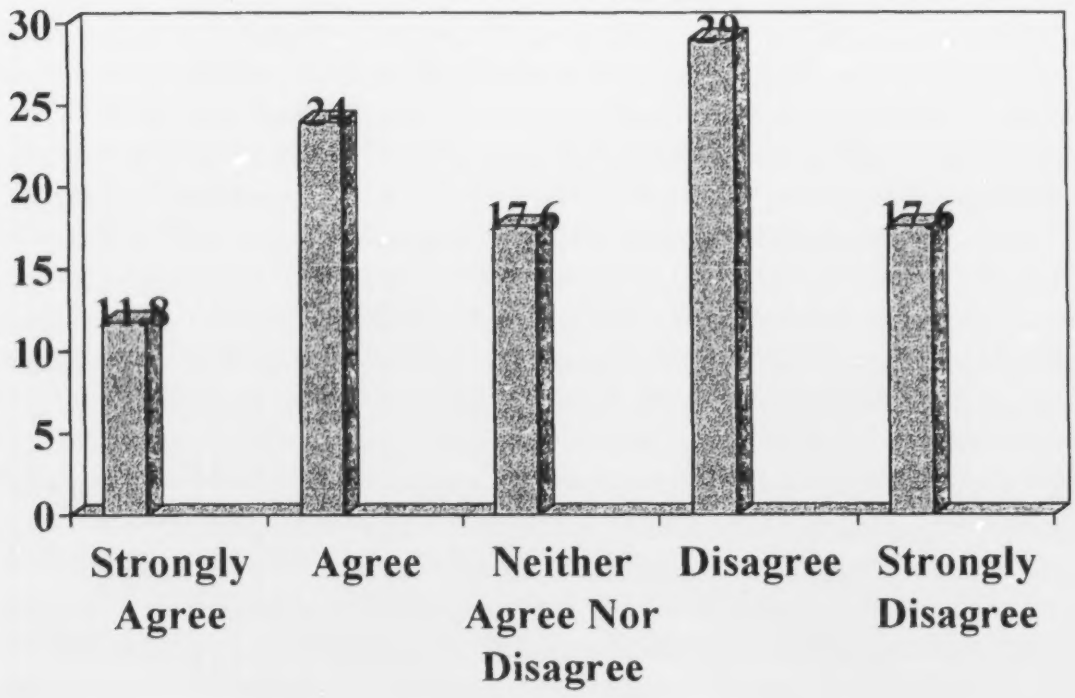

Figure 7. Percentage of students who reported that they if they had to speak Spanish they could use what they knew to communicate.

The survey indicated that 11.8% of the students reported that they strongly agreed that if they had to speak Spanish they could use what they knew to communicate. A larger number of students agreed that they could accomplish this task with 24% responding to this statement. There were 17.6% of the students who neither agreed nor disagreed or strongly disagreed responded to this statement. The largest number of students indicated that they disagreed with this statement with a 29%.

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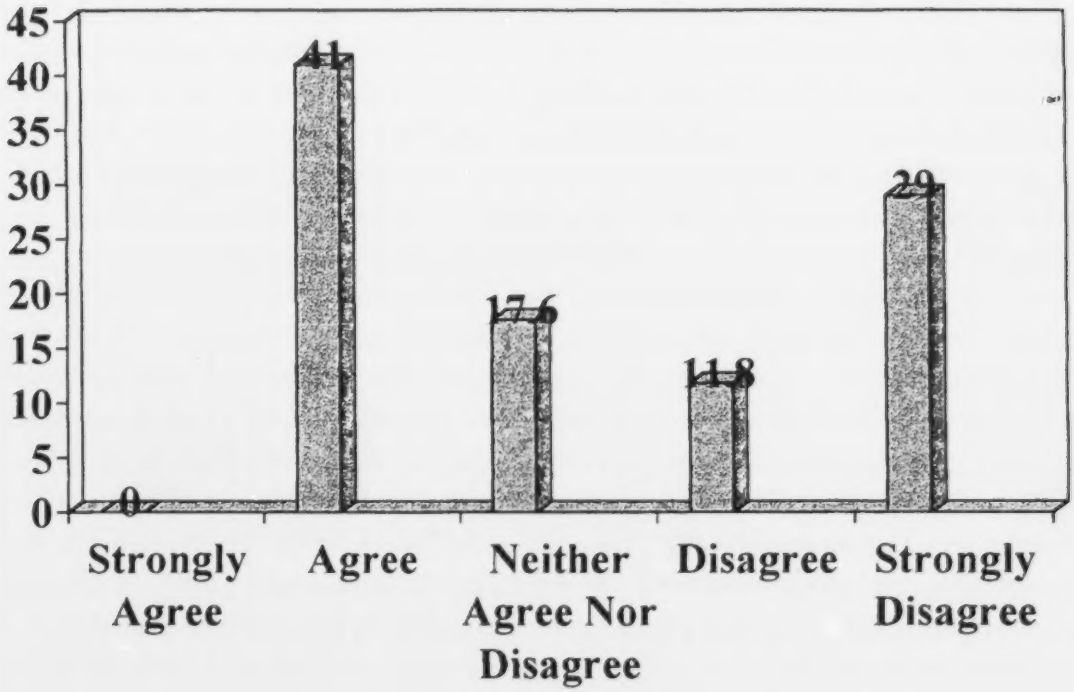

Figure 8. Percentage of students who could write well in Spanish because they knew how to organize their thoughts and use the language they had learned.

None of the students strongly agreed that they felt confident writing in Spanish and applying what they had learned. The largest number of students, 41%, indicated that they agreed with this statement. Almost 18% neither agreed nor disagreed, while 11.8% disagreed with this idea. The second largest percentage of students reported that they strongly disagreed that they could write well in Spanish.

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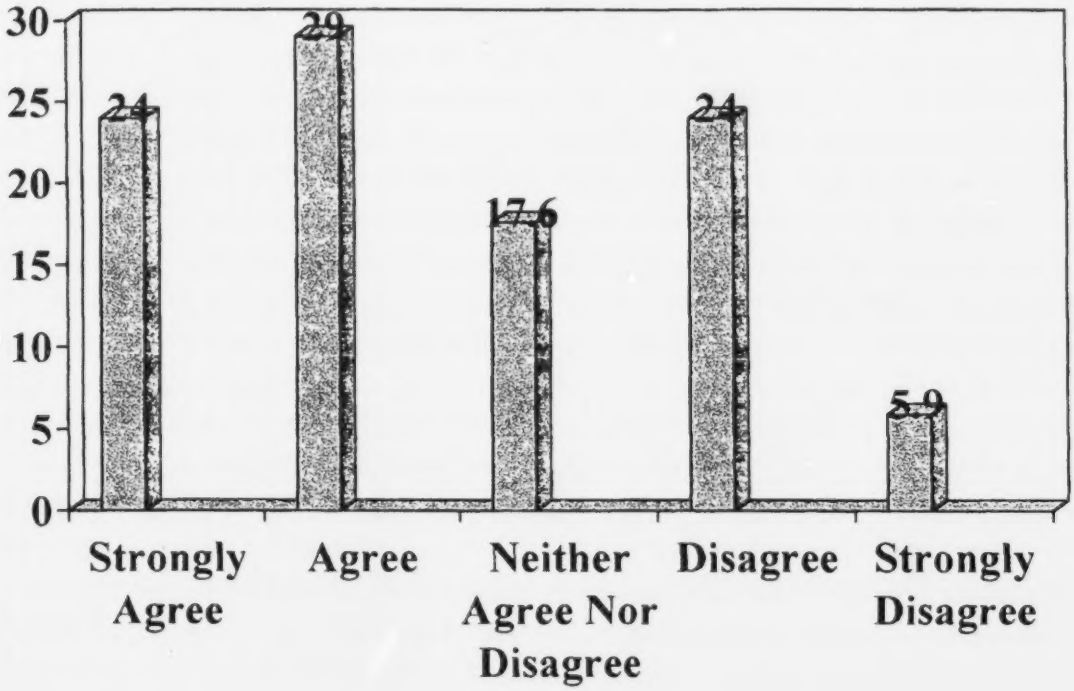

Figure 9. Percentage of students who said they knew where to go for help if they needed additional practice or explanations.

Twenty-four percent of the students indicated that they strongly believed that they know where to go for help if they need additional practice or explanations. A slightly higher number, 29%, indicated that they agreed they could tackle this task while 17.6% indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed. Twenty-four percent reported that they disagreed that they could handle this situation appropriately while 5.9% strongly disagreed.

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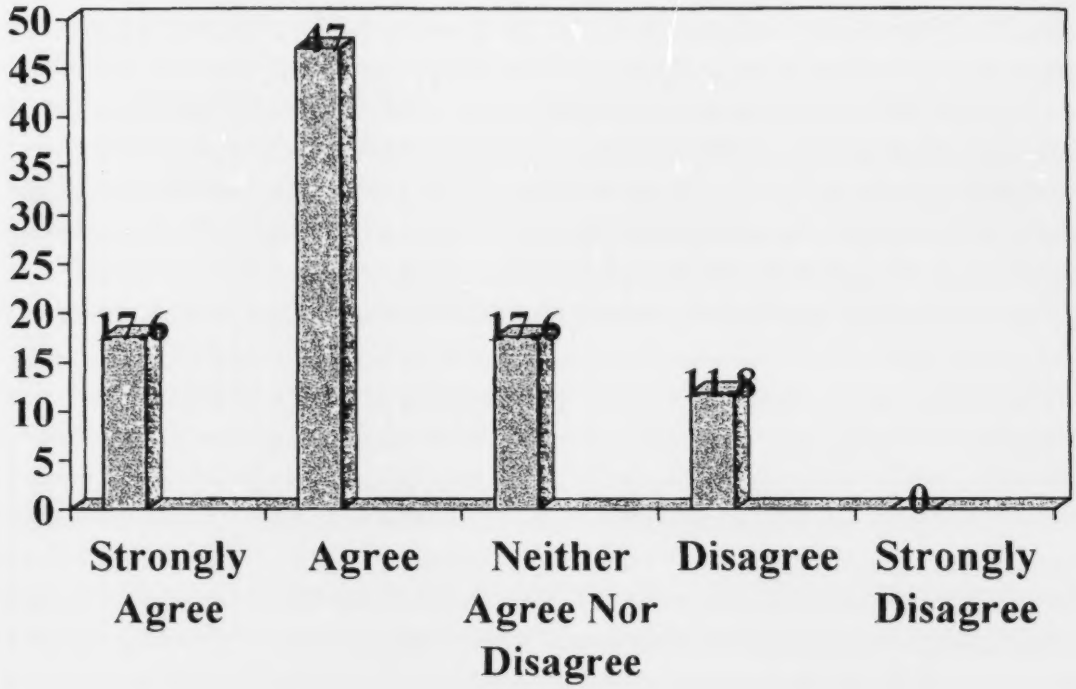

Figure 10. Percentage of students who believed that studying for Spanish would be different from the way they prepared for other courses.

The survey showed that 17.6% of students strongly agreed that their study skills would be different for Spanish compared to their other courses. A larger number of students agreed with this statement, with 47% indicating this as their response. There were 17.6% of students that neither agreed nor disagreed while a smaller number, 11.8%, disagreed with this statement. None of the students strongly agreed with this statement indicating that they knew they would have to engage in different study techniques for Spanish class.

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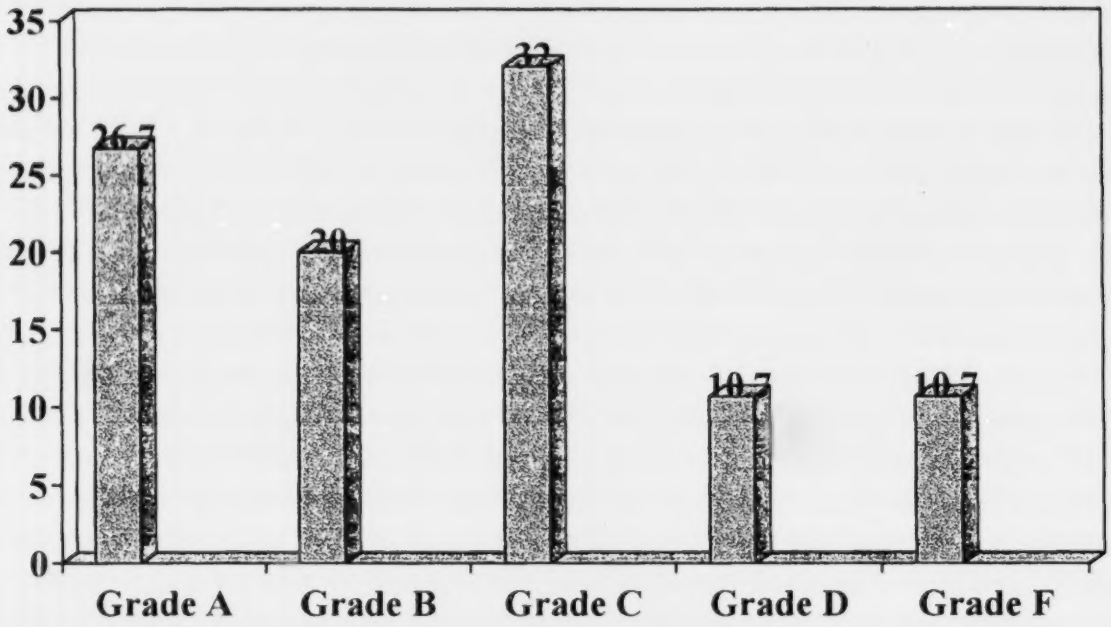

Figure 11. Percentage of students' grades for a vocabulary assessment.

Students' progress in a Spanish class was documented with the grades they received on a chapter vocabulary assessment given in class. The highest number of students received a C grade on the vocabulary assessment with 32% of the students receiving this grade. Close to 27% of the students received an A grade and 20% received a B grade. An equal amount of students, 10.7%, received D and F grades on the assessment.

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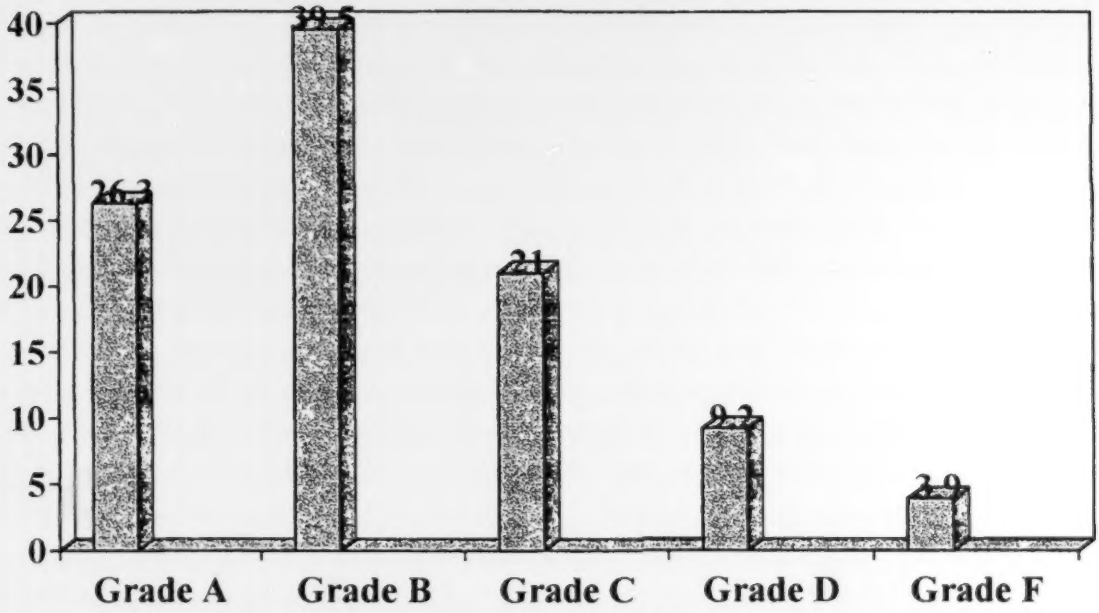

Figure 12. Percentages of students' grades for a chapter test.

Students' progress in a Spanish class was documented with grades on a chapter test. The grades indicated that 26.3% of the students received A grades while the largest number of students, 39.5%, received B grades. Twenty-one percent of the students received C grades and 9.2% of the students received D grades. The smallest number of students, 3.9%, received F grades on the test.

The teacher journal entries indicated that students needed instruction on language learning strategies and failed to use correct strategies for specific tasks. When students learned new vocabulary the teacher did not observe students creating vocabulary lists or flash cards to facilitate their learning. Students did not take part in any vocabulary learning strategies unless instructed by the teacher. There was some frustration and anxiety observed as students noticed that they were responsible for learning several vocabulary words.

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Most students expressed extreme frustration when asked to listen to Spanish and answer questions. Students were hesitant to complete tasks for a grade and to accept that this type of assessment would be required on chapter tests. Most students did not approach listening activities while using any type of strategy. During listening comprehension activities students expressed their frustration by creating disturbances and interruptions during the activities. They were also observed to give up easily during activities and attempted to cheat by looking at answers students around them had written.

Students were equally timid when asked to speak in Spanish. Unless students could give one word answers to simple questions they usually chose not to respond to the teacher's requests or questions. Most students chose not to use Spanish in class with their classmates. Once simple everyday phrases were learned they decided not to use the language they learned in class. Students appeared to not feel very confident about their language or pronunciation skills.

The teacher also noticed that students did not favor reading any type of text in Spanish that did not introduce vocabulary or use pictures. Students tended to avoid reading any text in their textbooks on their own. They felt intimidated by the information they were expected to read with the little Spanish they knew. While reading, students became irritated and discouraged when they could not identify all the words in a sentence. Students were cautious to take risks and guess at the meaning of words when they came upon words they could not identify. Few students realized that Spanish words resemble English words

quite frequently. Students needed to be shown how to identify these words and make educated guesses regarding these words.

Students did not have many opportunities to create writing samples in class. When students were asked to use their language skills in written form they were ineffective at creating logical sentences following grammatical structures that were introduced in class. Students seemed unsure of how to begin writing and how to organize their ideas correctly. While most students could write simple sentences with subjects and verbs most were concerned about expressing their ideas in several sentences to create a paragraph. When the task required them to provide more than a one word answer they were very hesitant to complete the task.

Probable Causes

Many high school foreign language teachers have hypothesized that some students in high school foreign language classes do not experience success in their classes due to their lack of effective study skills. It has become apparent to teachers that many students have not been formally taught language skills before enrolling in a foreign language class. Teachers assume that their students know how to study extensive vocabulary lists and are able to develop effective listening skills on their own. Teachers have observed that some students do not possess basic strategies required to meet standards of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The reality is that students who are not ideally suited to learn a foreign language do, in fact, enroll in foreign language classes, and many need to receive instruction on language skills to be successful.

Another reason many students do not succeed is that they choose not to engage in language skills that are used in class. Surveys taken voluntarily by students indicated that many students did not employ the language skills that were taught and reinforced in class. The teacher may engage students in a variety of activities to enhance language skills, but some students do not take it upon themselves to replicate the activities at home or for other lessons. Some students may also not realize that they are learning language skills, (LLS), or that the language skills taught in class can be applied to additional lessons. They may need to be told that they are learning language skills, and shown how to use these skills for different aspects of learning.

The literature suggests several underlying causes for lack of achievement in a foreign language class. One such reason is that students do not know which language learning skills to use for a specific task. Successful students choose different LLS compared to unsuccessful students. They are able to identify their choices of strategies, and explain why they use them. They can also modify the strategies to fit their task, or for their personal needs as learners. Unsuccessful learners do not know how to choose suitable LLS or how to use skills together to form a "strategy chain" (Green & Oxford, 262).

Many students also seem to think that "cramming" for tests and examinations appears to be a useful strategy to promote learning. Many falsely believe that they can study for a foreign language class the same way they study for other academic classes. LoCastro (1981) discovered in her research that junior high and high school students relied on memorization to prepare for

exams, which served as their utmost concern and source of motivation. Many students think that memory strategies alone will allow them to succeed in all aspects of language learning. They fail to recognize that besides memorization there are strategies to enhance reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. LoCastro also found that students believed they had to do extra work outside of class to successfully learn a language rather than apply simple LLS in everyday practice and study.

Students may not thrive because teachers and researchers have not paid much attention to what language learners can do to successfully learn a foreign language. Bialystock (1981) stated that research has neglected to focus on what students can do to enhance their learning along with factors such as language learning aptitude, attitude, motivation, or personal characteristics. Language researchers have begun to investigate effective LLS that learners use and teachers teach. The goal should be to teach LLS to all language learners to facilitate their progress.

Chapter 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Language learning strategies are cited as crucial to learning a foreign language, but yet they are defined differently by researchers. According to Lessard-Clouston (1997), language skills may be referred to as learner strategies, learning strategies, and language learning strategies. The specific names of these strategies are unimportant as they all serve the same function, which is assisting students in learning. Weinstein and Mayer (as cited in Lessard-Clouston, 1997) defined language learning strategies as behaviors and thoughts that learners use to learn the language and change how the learner sorts out information.

It is clear that language skills, behaviors, and thoughts are used to facilitate the learner's growth. It is essential to know what behaviors and thoughts a learner uses that constitute effective language skills. Chamot (1993) described them as specific tasks or techniques or a general plan to complete a task. They can be observable tasks such as taking notes or drawing visuals or diagrams. They may also be non-observable tasks such as listening, comprehension activities, or reading activities where a specific task is not observable.

Language skills are defined differently by researchers, and are characterized differently. Lessard-Clouston (1997) described them as having four basic qualities: They are created by learners; they enhance language learning and competence as observed in the learner's reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills; they can be observable or non-observable; and they involve memory and information. Oxford (as cited in Lessard-Clouston, 1997) found that language skills include other elements. She reported that they allow learners to become more self-directed and solve problems. In addition, they involve many aspects of learning, are flexible in use, and are influenced by many different factors.

Oxford, et.al. (1990) grouped language skills into five categories: metacognitive, cognitive, memory, social, or affective language skills. Language skills are considered metacognitive when they involve organizing, focusing, and evaluating learning. Cognitive skills are those that include analyzing, reasoning, transferring information, taking notes, and summarizing. Grouping, using imagery, guessing, and inferring meaning are elements of memory skills. Social skills require the questioning of others and cooperating. Affective skills deal with managing emotions, attitudes, and motivation.

Many researchers have conducted studies and experiments that explored why students do not succeed in a foreign language class. One explanation is that students do not understand that a foreign language cannot be studied in the same way that students study for other subjects. LoCastro (1994) concluded that

students usually study for exams and rely mainly on memorization to succeed. She also stated that tests tend to provide the only motivation for them to study.

Another reason for low achievement is that many students do not know what language skills to use or how to use them correctly. Lawson and Hogben (1996) reported in their study that high school students did not report using different strategies frequently. They depended on simple memory techniques for learning vocabulary. They chose to learn vocabulary by repeating words along with their meaning rather than engage in complex vocabulary learning strategies. Block, et. al. (as cited in Green & Oxford, 1995) determined that unsuccessful learners do, in fact, use some strategies, but they choose strategies that are not appropriate for their learning styles, or they do not know how to combine strategies effectively. Ultimately this research suggested that many students know about language skills, but do not have enough of the correct information to allow them to strengthen those skills.

An additional reason for low achievement may not have to do with learners at all. Lack of research in the study of language skills has kept many teachers from knowing how they may assist students in learning. Bialystock (1981) noted that as of 1980 very little research had been conducted to learn what students could do to facilitate their learning. Oxford (1989) also argued that language skills have not been investigated sufficiently. She observed that teachers themselves neglect to discuss their own experiences with colleagues to determine useful language skills. Reflection on valuable language skills serves

as an essential role for the teacher. Howard Gardner (as cited in Oxford, 1989) stated that feelings and attitudes about learning a language are the keys to achievement, and many teachers ignore them. Teachers also have to reflect on what works for them to discover what works for students.

Researchers have proposed several techniques and strategies that teachers can use to help students succeed. Some have suggested that students should receive proper instruction in effective language skills. Chamot and Kupper (1989) argued that students should learn about language skills while they receive instruction in the foreign language. Students do not have to take a separate "how-to" or study skills class because language skills can be taught in the regular class. Teachers have been cited as being effective in providing the instruction in their classes (Chamot & Kupper, 1989).

Teachers cannot simply walk into their classrooms and start implementing language skills. They need to consider many aspects that are related to the preparation and implementation of instruction of language skills. Hismanoglu (2001) determined that teachers should first administer a questionnaire to students about their study habits and beliefs about language learning. He also recommended that teachers get acquainted with students and their goals, motivators, and preferred learning styles. Teachers need to analyze their textbooks and lesson plans to ensure that proper language skills are taught and connected with the curriculum. Teachers may discover that they provide

instruction on language skills but need to develop the instruction to correlate with their lessons and students' needs.

Most of the recent research offers solutions and remedies for helping students achieve through the use of language skills. Oxford (1994) recommended that teachers provide lessons on language skills in class through the use of handouts, explanations, activities, brainstorming tasks, and reference materials. Language skills need to be explicit, relevant, and given with lots of practice with authentic materials. Those language skills should be based on the students' beliefs, attitudes, and needs, and meet the goals of the tasks, learners, and their styles of learning. Haggstrom (1993) reported her findings of successful language skills' instruction for her college students. She proposed that teachers orient the students to the text and syllabus, address student concerns about comprehension of the language, suggest the SQRRR strategy for reading comprehension, and apply specific strategies for completing homework in the text. Ramirez (1986) argued that teachers should ensure that all learners participate more actively in class activities. He also reported that teachers should make learners more aware of communication strategies and teach explicit strategies to master the tasks of practice, study, and memorization.

The Internet has served as an excellent source for teachers to report and receive information on successful language skills and instruction. Students have also accessed data bases for valuable information that they themselves can use to boost their learning.

Blake (2001) formulated a list of strategies for language learners to use. The list advised students to use flash cards with images, create opportunities to use the language, drill themselves with vocabulary and verbs, watch, and listen to programs, and read magazines that are in the target language. These skills allow students to become accustomed to the language's natural patterns of structure. Global and selective listening were cited as helpful listening strategies that students can utilize. Students are also encouraged to handle their emotions in a positive way if they are having difficulty with the language or a particular strategy. One web site concluded that students should develop and take practice tests, and recognize patterns and redundancies within the language. Study "buddies" are seen as beneficial in promoting teamwork.

Reflection is considered to be an essential component of language learning. Just as teachers need to reflect on their personal learning experiences and lesson plans, students need to reflect on their learning. Rather than evaluate what they have learned, students need to evaluate how they go about their learning. Kojic-Sabo and Lightbrown (1999) studied how students approach learning vocabulary and discovered that reflection increased the students' awareness of how they studied and allowed them to evaluate the effectiveness of their choices. If students are aware of the language skills they choose and can evaluate the use of language skills, they may choose better language skills for themselves in the future. Haggstrom (1993) also learned that student feedback through reflection was very helpful according to reports from students. They

reported that language skills had a positive effect on their learning and affected their understanding of how to study a foreign language.

The information from this research makes it clear that students need to learn language learning strategies that address all areas of language learning. Students should learn strategies that will facilitate their learning in vocabulary, reading, writing, speaking and listening. The action plan designed will focus on learning strategies that address these areas of learning and assess their progress through journal entries and assessments. The teacher will also monitor and observe student use of language skills in class and document these observations.

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of teaching of learning language strategies during the period from September 2001 to December 2001, the targeted first year high school Spanish students will increase their achievement in Spanish as measured by observation, academic performance, and student journal entries.

In order to accomplish the objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Develop a series of language skills to use in the curriculum.
2. Create a series of lesson plans providing instruction of language skills during the regular class periods.
3. Design reflection journals for students to analyze their learning styles or choice of language skills.
4. Monitor and observe student use of language skills in class.

Action Plan

Week 1 Orienting the student
- a. introduction to course and syllabus
- b. orientation to text and course materials
- c. student journal entry on reaction

Week 2 Instruction on strategy #1 (vocabulary)
- a. use of flash cards and categorizing words
- b. teacher observation of use in class
- c. students write journal entry commenting on their experience with these strategies

Week 3 Instruction on strategy #2 (listening)
- a. use of global vs. selective listening
- b. practice exercises using the two strategies
- c. student journal entries reflecting on strategy

Week 4 Instruction on strategy #3 (writing)
- a. graphic organizers for writing
- b. writing assignment given
- c. assessment on writing
- d. teacher observation

Week 5 Instruction on strategy #4 (speaking)
- a. speaking for communication vs. perfection
- b. cooperative groups for communicating
- c. teacher observations
- d. students' journal entries reflecting on experience

Week 6 Instruction on strategy #5 (reading)
- a. use of cognates
- b. reading activity
- c. teacher observation
- d. assessment

Week 7 Instruction on strategy #6 (vocabulary)
- a. chunking words and using images
- b. practice exercises
- c. assessment- vocabulary quiz
- d. teacher observation

Week 8 Instruction on strategy #7 (listening)
- a. taking listening comprehension tests
- b. practice listening exercises
- c. assessment- listening comprehension

d. student journal entry on strategy

Week 9 — Instruction on strategy #8 (writing)
a. text reconstruction activity
b. analyzing common errors
c. assessment – writing activity
d. teacher observation

Week 10 — Instruction on strategy #9 (reading)
a. introduction to SQRRR method
b. apply SQRRR to authentic reading materials
c. assessment on reading
d. students journal entry on strategy

Week 11 — Instruction on strategy #10 (speaking)
a. getting around words you don't know
b. circumlocution
c. practice
d. teacher observation
e. student journal entry on experience

Week 12 — Instruction on resources, supplements
a. introduction to internet sites for practice and explanations
b. assignment to use resource
c. student journal entry

Methods of Assessment

In order to determine the effects of the intervention, assessments will be used to determine the level of student success with the use of language skills. Teacher journal entries will be kept on class observations throughout the intervention period. This information will be kept either weekly or biweekly to document students' use of language skills. The student journal entries will be used by the teacher to monitor students' attitudes and experience with the language skills. They will be assigned upon the instruction of non-observable language skills and read upon completion. Student achievement will be

measured by assessments which require students to use the language skills learned throughout the intervention.

Chapter 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The object of this project was to increase student success in the foreign language class through the use of learning strategies. The implementation of learning strategies used for vocabulary learning, reading, writing, and listening were selected to achieve the desired results.

During the month of September, the intervention began with data collection from students. The students were given a learning strategies survey to assess their knowledge and application of learning strategies. On a weekly basis students were instructed on a specific learning strategy and assigned to use it. Students were given an orientation of their textbook and the course objectives. Students completed questions about the contents of the textbook and reported their findings about the textbook in a journal entry. Students also learned what cognates were and how to use them to facilitate their learning of a foreign language. In class they completed activities requiring the identification of cognates. A reading assessment was given to document their success with the use of cognates.

During the month of October several more interventions were implemented. On a weekly basis students received instruction on additional

learning strategies. Students learned how to create and use flash cards for vocabulary learning. They were also introduced to the idea of using chunking as a vocabulary learning tool. Students also received ideas to improve their listening comprehension skills and tried them in several practice exercises. Graphic organizers were also introduced to assist students with their writing skills. Each of these learning strategies was concluded with journal entries or assessments.

During the month of November students continued working on improving listening skills. They completed listening activities with both global and selective listening techniques and compared the advantages and disadvantages of using both. The teacher introduced a writing checklist for students to use when revising writing products. Students completed a writing product and evaluated the usefulness of this tool when making revisions. The original action plan scheduled a text reconstruction activity to improve writing skills. The teacher observed that students were making common unnecessary errors in their writing and changed the writing activity. The instructor believed that a writing checklist would better benefit students with their writing assignments.

Through the month of December the teacher presented the SQRRR method as a way to read successfully in a foreign language. All students applied the SQRRR method to a reading selection. Students also learned about circumlocution to get around words they did not know or may have forgotten. In cooperative groups students completed an activity requiring them to use circumlocution to express an idea to their group members. As an additional

speaking strategy students compared speaking for communication rather than speaking for perfection.

January was the final month of intervention. Students completed a survey on learning strategies. This survey was the same as the survey given at the start of the intervention. The original action plan included instruction on resources and supplements in the final week. This was omitted due to the scheduling of final exams and no access to the school computer lab.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess the effects of the learning strategies on student achievement, teacher and student journal entries were kept and assessments were given on various strategies used in the intervention. Each week of the intervention included one of these data collecting devices. While most of these strategies were familiar to students from other classes there were some strategies that were new or specific to language learning for students. All students willingly participated in using the strategies and reflecting on their effectiveness.

At the beginning of the intervention the teacher did not feel that students could successfully use or read their textbooks. The students were given an orientation to their textbooks' organization and structure. Students completed a questionnaire requiring them to observe the organizational format of their textbook. After using the text for five weeks students completed a journal entry regarding their perception of the textbook. Most students reported favorable responses regarding their feelings toward using their textbook. Students

indicated the pictures, captions, examples, activities, and size of the book to be good elements of their text. Some students reported that the book was not motivating to use, not well organized, did not include enough English, or included difficult readings. Some students reported that the cultural information, geography, and maps were interesting elements in the text. The teacher observed that students did not particularly enjoy completing the assignment to preview their text. Students indicated that the activity was boring while others said it was a good idea. Those that appreciated the activity liked getting a preview of what was yet to come and felt that it was an activity well worth doing.

One of the first parts of the reading strategies was to introduce students to the idea of cognates in Spanish. Students were shown examples of cognates in Spanish and asked to identify words in English that they resembled. Students also received practice in listening to the pronunciation of words in Spanish and identifying the words they sounded like in English. Throughout the activity the teacher noticed that all students could successfully determine relationships between words in Spanish and English. They welcomed the idea of cognates and were enthusiastic to identify words in both languages. They seemed to feel more comfortable with the foreign language now knowing that they could rely on this new skill. Students completed a reading assignment in class and were instructed to rely on cognates to help them understand the reading. Some students appeared frustrated when they came upon a word that was not a cognate or identified a word incorrectly. Students were instructed to use these cognates as a reading tool in an assessment.

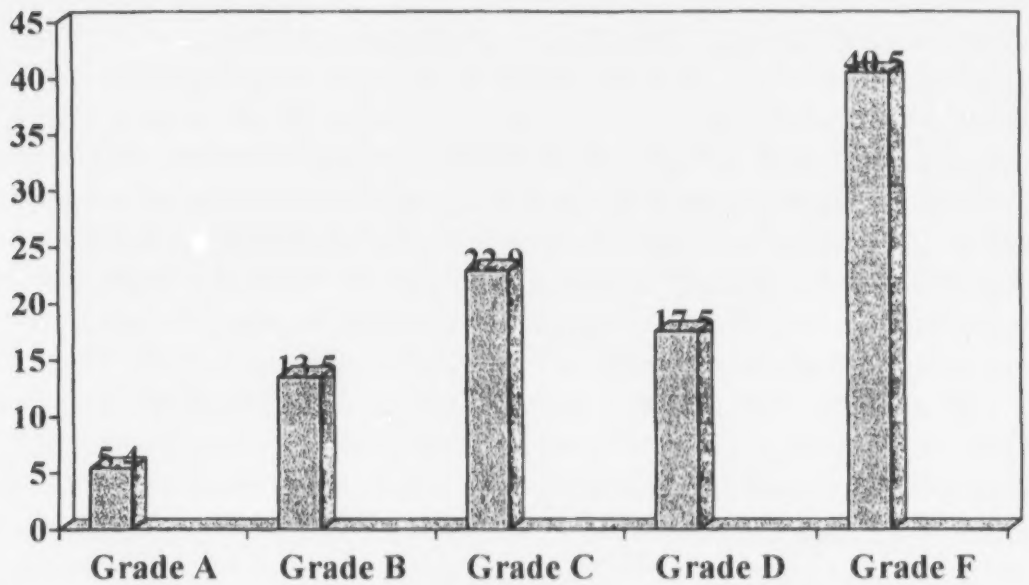

Figure 13. Grades received by students who took a reading assessment using cognates.

Figure 13 indicates the grade results that students received based on a reading assessment on a chapter test. This reading assessment included several cognates that students needed to identify to comprehend the information correctly. The results indicate that only 5.4% of the students earned an A grade, 13.5% received a B grade, 22.9% received a C grade, 17.5% received a D grade, and 40.5% received a F grade on the reading assessment. Overall 41.8% of the students received an average or above grade on this assessment. Almost the same amount of students failed this reading assessment. Several factors could have contributed to students not receiving adequate scores. The reading also required students to rely on the vocabulary and grammatical structures learned in the chapter. The questions students answered were written in

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Spanish, which could have caused confusion among students. If students did not read the questions carefully or understand them completely their answers may not have been correct.

The results of this assessment indicate that recognizing and identifying cognates is a useful and worthwhile strategy that teachers could use in their class. Using cognates as a reading strategy helped 41.8% of the students who received an average or above average grade. Although students did not completely comprehend text through the use of cognates alone it should be considered a strategy that students could use in other classes.

Students learned about the SQRRR method as a reading strategy. Students received instruction on how to use the SQRRR strategy and practiced its use in class. As a class activity students read a reading selection from the text while using the SQRRR method to read the information. The students were lead through a series of exercises suggested by the SQRRR method which were completed individually. Students completed questions following the reading assignment. The results from the reading were compiled in Figure 14.

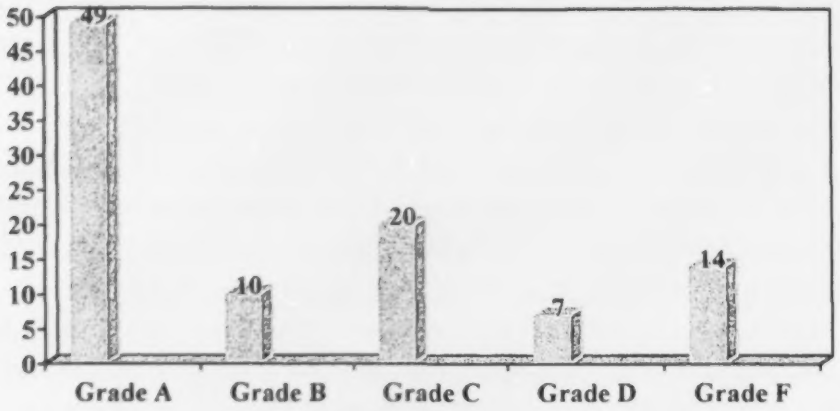

Figure 14. Grades students received on a reading assessment using the SQRRR method.

Figure 14 shows the grades students received based on the responses they gave to the questions provided on the reading assignment. Forty-nine percent of the students received an A grade, 10% received a B grade, 20% received a C grade, 7% received a D grade, and 14% received an F grade. The SQRRR method was apparently effective in helping 79% of the students who received a C grade or higher.

Students also wrote about their reactions to using the SQRRR method in journal entries. Students reported that the SQRRR method allowed them to focus on details in the reading that they might not have noticed otherwise. Some students mentioned that they felt they comprehended the reading better while using it. They noticed that this strategy broke down paragraphs for them and requires them to pay careful attention to what they are reading. Some students revealed that they had been previously introduced to this method and were familiar to its process. Students also had negative feelings toward the SQRRR method. They felt that the method was time consuming and tedious. They did

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not approve of the many steps that the method required one to take to complete the process. Some students found the strategy boring and uninteresting to use. While students may not enjoy using this reading strategy the results indicated that it could be helpful and effective in helping students read and comprehend the article successfully.

As a vocabulary learning strategy, students were shown how to make and utilize flash cards. Students were assigned to make flash cards for every vocabulary word on their lists for a given chapter. While most students made very simple flash cards with Spanish words on one side and English words on the reverse, there were other students who included details on their flash cards. Some students color-coded their flash cards for the different categories in the vocabulary, or paired four words on one single flash card. Students were asked to use the flash cards in class as a review with a partner. They showed a word in Spanish or in English to their partners, and their partners identified the meaning of the word.

The teacher observed that most students seemed to enjoy quizzing each other and working in pairs on the vocabulary. The activity was focused on vocabulary learning rather than having students study a list of words. They were active in the exercise saying words and working together rather than being passive and staring at a list of words on a page in their text.

Students reported their experience with flash cards in a journal entry. Students indicated that the flash cards gave them an accurate idea of what they did or did not know, and provided a quick and easy way to organize and review

the vocabulary. The students noted that the flash cards facilitated their memorization of the words because the cards forced them to study. They also realized that writing the words in Spanish and English helped them to learn the words and note the spelling. They noted that the flash cards were better than keeping vocabulary lists because the cards were good for organization and easier to carry compared to the text. However, there were students who found that the flash cards were time consuming, boring to make, costly, or easy to lose.

As an additional vocabulary learning strategy students were introduced to the idea of chunking words in Spanish. Students were shown an example of words chunked together in Spanish from the previous chapter. As an activity students were assigned to take verbs and nouns from their current vocabulary and create logical chunked phrases. Working in pairs, students created four chunked phrases and drew pictures to demonstrate the meaning of the sentence. In the second part of the activity students used the images drawn to guess the correct chunked phrase that was written. During the activity the students did not have any difficulty creating sentences with the given vocabulary. They were successful in matching the logical verbs with vocabulary to create meaningful sentences. Their images clearly defined the meaning behind the sentences they wrote. The teacher also noted that most students had sentences with similarly chunked words. The teacher implemented a vocabulary assessment for students in order to see if their knowledge of chunked phrases aided their learning.

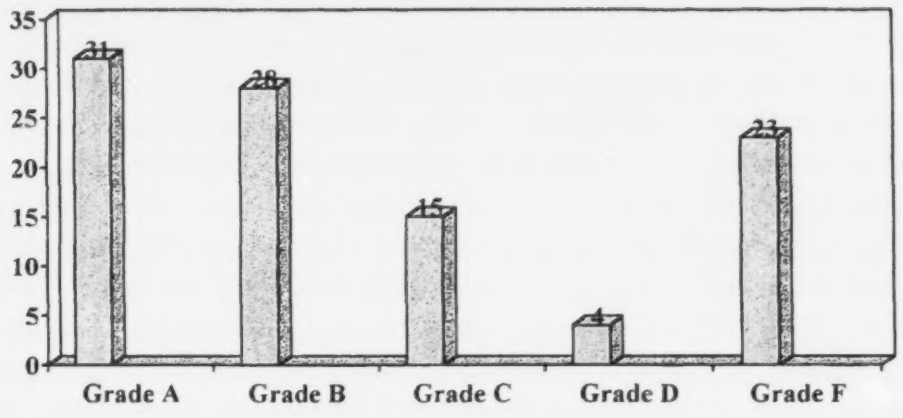

Figure 15. Grades students received on a vocabulary assessment.

The results shown in Figure 15 indicate that 31% of the students who took the vocabulary assessments received an A grade, 28% received a B grade, 15% received a C grade, 4% received a D grade, and 23% received an F grade. Although 74% of the students received a C grade or above, 27% of the students failed to achieve an average grade on the vocabulary assessment. These results suggest that using chunking as a vocabulary learning strategy may not be the best strategy for all students. Chunking may best serve students when used along with additional vocabulary learning strategies. However, for 74% of the students who did take the assessment chunking proved as a successful strategy for them.

As part of their chapter assessments students were required to take listening comprehension tests. Students claimed to dislike these assessments and not felt unsuccessful when completing them. Students were introduced to a series of strategies to use when taking listening comprehension tests. The teacher demonstrated how to use each of the strategies and provided several opportunities for students to practice these strategies. Students were asked to

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use two strategies that they had not previously used and to describe their effectiveness and usefulness in the activity.

During the activities the teacher observed that students were using the strategies and there were fewer disturbances due to frustration than there had been previously observed during the activities. Students pointed out that the strategies helped them think more clearly and improved their concentration. They also reported that focusing was key to successfully completing these listening activities. A few students found that some strategies were more difficult to use than others. Some noted that they were not quite sure of the effectiveness of these strategies until they knew the results of their test. Nevertheless, students indicated that they would continue to use these strategies and to try different strategies the next time. Students also acknowledged that using these strategies would require time for them to figure out which ones would work best and that improvement would result with additional practice. The teacher gave an assessment to measure the scores of students using strategies to improve their listening comprehension.

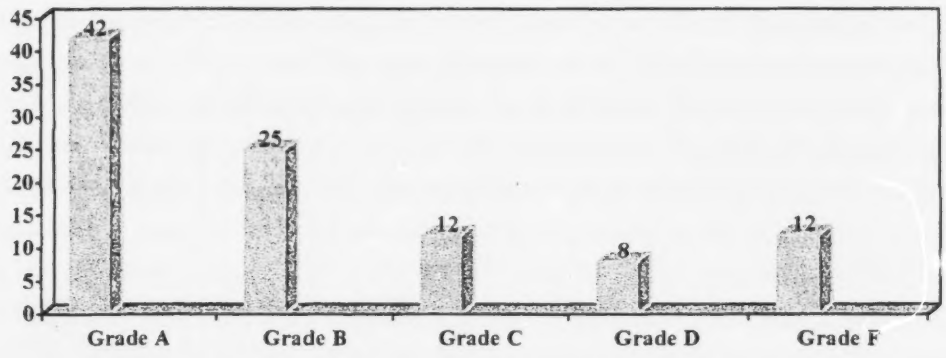

Figure 16. Grades students received on a listening comprehension assessment.

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Students took a comprehension assessment after receiving instruction on effective listening strategies. Forty-two percent of the students received a A grade while 25% received a B grade. Twelve percent received a C grade and 8% received a D grade. Only a small percentage, 12%, received a failing grade on this assessment. (See Figure 16.)

As an additional listening strategy students learned about the use of global versus selective listening. Students watched a video from the chapter being studied and were asked to watch the video and record as much information as they could about what they heard and observed. After reporting their observations the students created a list of topics in the video on which to focus. They then chose two topics to focus on when viewing the video a second time. Students watched the video and recorded as much information as they could on the two topics on which they chose to selectively focus. Students compared their experience with global and selective listening in a Venn diagram. They found that global listening was effective to get an overall idea of what the video was about, and the activity made them listen for a variety of things. On the negative side students testified that this strategy was confusing and provided them with little information on a few topics. Students felt that it was difficult to take notes on the information heard, and they did not understand the information as well as they could have.

The selective listening strategy was more favorably received by students. They were aware that selectively listening for information was easier and, in a way, forced them to pay attention to what they were viewing. They noticed that

they could receive more information about the few things they focused on and heard more details they would ordinarily miss by not using this strategy. Students did note some negative aspects to this strategy. They continued to have frustration deciphering the information heard and felt they needed to use both strategies together to successfully understand the video.

Students did not have many opportunities to compose a writing assignment prior to the introduction of writing strategies. Students were given a group assignment to write a letter to an exchange student informing him of necessary information for his stay in the United States for the coming school year. Students first completed a mind map that outlined the following categories: a description of the school and students, activities done in and outside of school, clothing or school supplies needed for the year, and how students arrived at school. All students completed the mind map together with vocabulary and verbs to be used in their written sentences. Once the mind maps were complete students wrote their first draft of their letter. The drafts were reviewed by the teacher who wrote comments and indicated errors or corrections to be made. Students reviewed these drafts, made corrections and revisions, and completed a final draft.

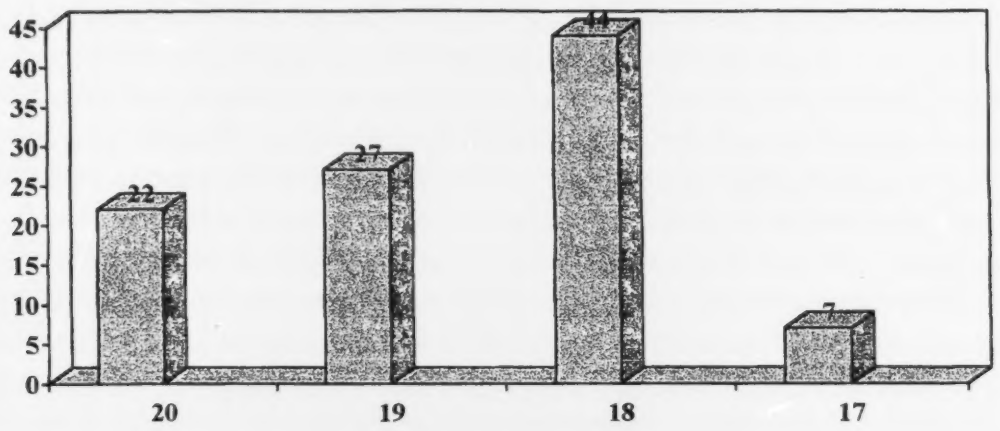

Figure 17. Grades students received on a group writing assessment.

Figure 17 specifies the results of students' writing assignment with use of a graphic organizer. This writing assessment was valued at a possible 20 points. The graph shows that students received a high grade of 20 points and a low grade of 17 points. All these scores indicate that students received 85% or better on their writing assignment. The graphic organizer apparently was successful in helping students organize their ideas and format their letter. While students may have written organized letters that included the required information, several factors played a part in their grade. Students completed a first draft which the teacher reviewed, revised their first draft, and then wrote a final draft. The results of their writing assignment would have been different if the first draft was graded and these scores were used. Since students had the opportunity to correct their errors the scores were higher than they would have been if only the first draft had been graded.

Along with using a graphic organizer to complete a writing assignment, students also received a writing checklist to catch common errors that they would ordinarily miss. The checklist consisted of 10 simple questions that addressed

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the organization of the writing, spelling, grammatical structures, and style of writing. Students used this checklist when writing their final draft of the same writing assignment that was used with the graphic organizers. Students wrote journal entries in groups to reveal their thoughts about using the writing checklist.

The journal entries indicated a positive response to the use of the writing checklist. Students wrote that the checklist did help them identify mistakes that they would have missed. They found that the checklist was a good indication of what one did or did not do well and allowed one to see what one needed in one's writing. They noted that they liked having the checklist and found it easy to use. On the negative side, students found using the checklist time consuming. They also suggested that the checklist include examples of good writing for students to use as a model.

The instructor included strategies to help students communicate more effectively as part of the action research. The goal of these strategies was to make students feel more comfortable speaking the language. The teacher instructed students how to express their ideas when they forget how to say something by means of circumlocution. Students received words that were previously learned to describe to group members. The students were asked to think of related words they could use to describe the words the instructor chose for them. In groups, students mentioned their related words while other group members tried to guess the word they were trying to describe. While students could not describe their words in complete sentences, they did cite several words that were related to their assigned word. The instructor did notice that a few

students could state their ideas in complete sentences rather than simply cite words. Some students were observed naming several related words compared to the few words that most students in the class could accomplish. All groups were successful in identifying the words that were described to them. During the process the teacher recognized that students relied on their English skills to state their ideas and used words in Spanish as their related words.

Students completed journal entries citing their reactions to this activity and its usefulness as a communicative strategy. Students thought the strategy would be useful for tests when they were assessed on their speaking and communicative skills. They stated that this strategy would be helpful in writing and in learning additional vocabulary words. They noticed that vocabulary was a major tool for this activity because one could think of related and non-related words to complete this activity.

Students conjured up several interesting ideas in their journal entries about circumlocution. They suggested that this activity would be more useful with more complex, difficult vocabulary words. Students also thought this strategy was a device that is natural for all language learners to use, and perhaps they did not need instruction on it. Some questions were also asked about how effective this strategy was. Students asked what they would do if they could not think of any related words for the one they were attempting to describe. Furthermore they stated that this strategy was unrealistic because speakers may not convey their ideas effectively to listeners.

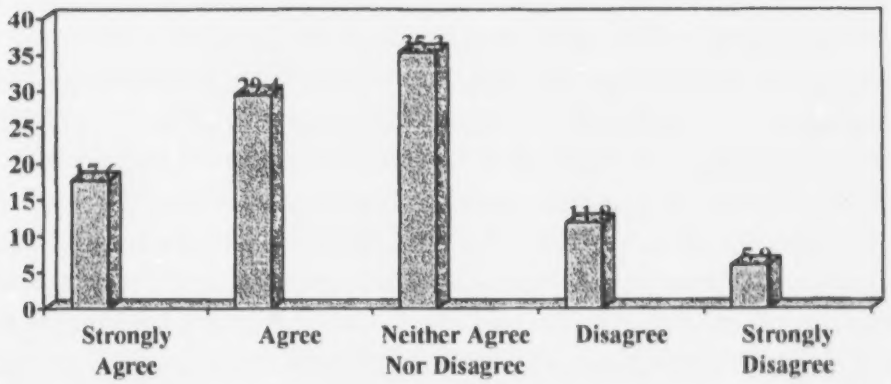
Along with circumlocution the instructor implemented a communicative activity that allowed students to communicate in different settings. The instructor gave a formal speaking assessment to students following the conclusion of a chapter. Students were asked a series of questions and asked to produce responses based on the vocabulary and grammar learned in the chapter. Students were assessed on correct responses given, pronunciation, and grammatical structures used.

In the second part of this activity the students were allowed to speak Spanish in a more informal atmosphere. Students were given topics to discuss in group settings without any formal assessment made by the teacher. Students were encouraged to speak and say as much as they could without worrying about how perfect they sounded or what grade they would receive. Students were asked to simply communicate in such a way that they would get their message across to other listeners.

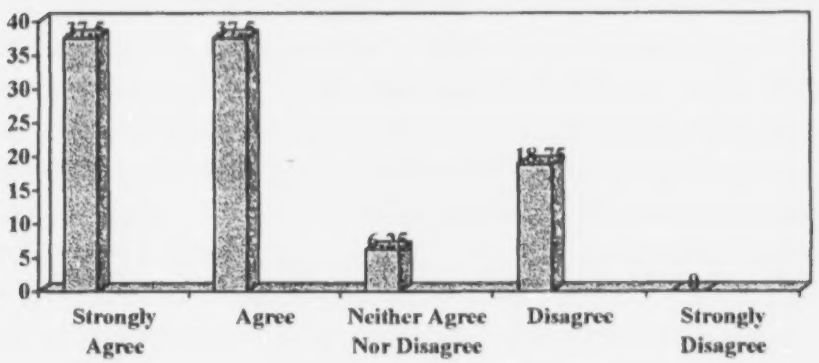
In addition to this activity students completed journal entries. Students were asked to respond to two questions: How do you feel when you do not have to speak perfectly in Spanish? and How does this activity help you with your speaking skills? Students responded that they felt more comfortable speaking in this type of low-key setting. They noted that there was less pressure to perform without error, and they felt less nervous about the situation. They felt free to express their ideas as they think they are. It was also mentioned that students did not feel confident that their ideas would be well understood since they might

be stating ideas incorrectly. Since there was no correction made by the listeners or the teacher the students did not know if they stated their ideas correctly.

As a conclusion to the action research students completed the same surveys as they were given at the start of the implementation of language learning strategies. The responses of the students were compared to the responses given in the first survey.



Pre-Intervention Survey Data



Post-Intervention Survey Data

Figure 18. Pre- and post-intervention percentages of targeted students who understood the format of their textbook, could find the information they needed, and had an idea of what they will learn this year.

In the post-intervention survey 38.5% of the students indicated that they both strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. Only 6.25% noted that did neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. There were 19.25% percent of students who stated that they disagreed and none who stated that they strongly disagreed with this statement. Approximately 20% more students responded that

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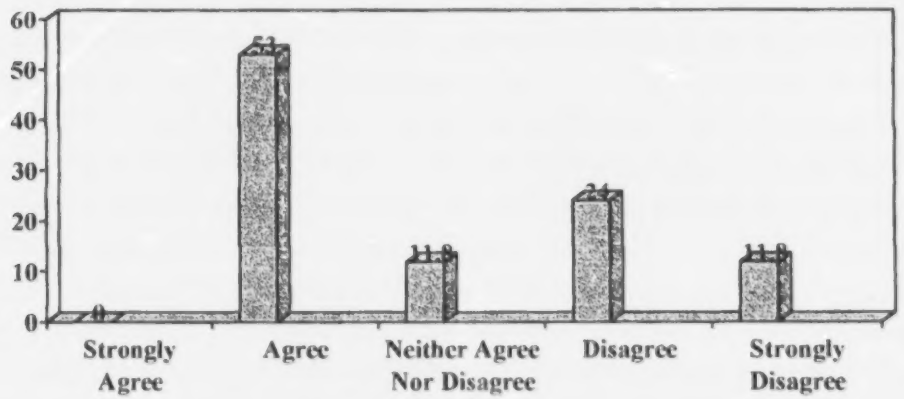
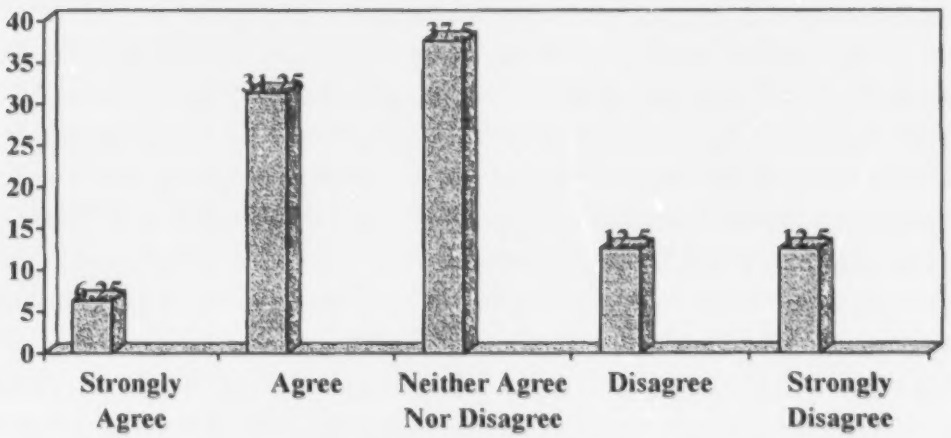
they strongly agreed and 29% less said they neither agreed nor disagreed. None of the students responded that they strongly disagreed which reflected a 5.9% decline in responses.



Pre-Intervention Survey Data



Post-Intervention Survey Data

Figure 19. Pre- and Post-Intervention percentages of targeted students who studied their vocabulary outside of class and had different ways to review the words.

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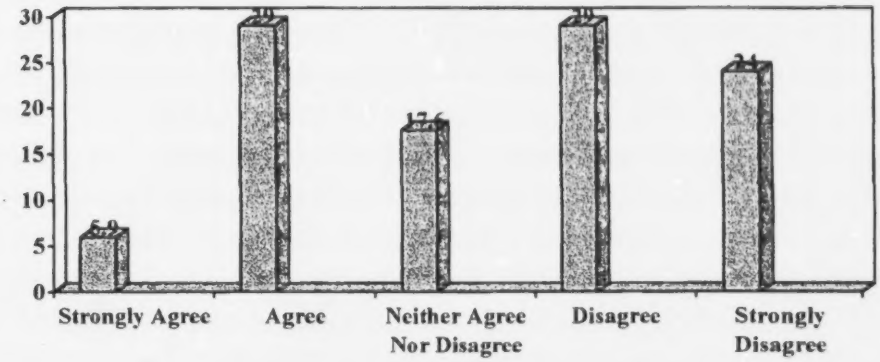
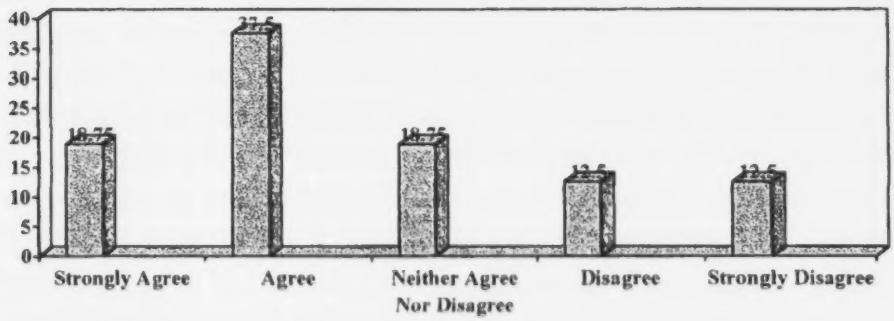
In the post-intervention survey 6.25% of the students noted that they strongly agreed with this statement and 31.25% stated that they agreed. There were 37.5% who neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. The same amount of students, 12.5%, indicated that they both disagreed and strongly disagreed.

None of the students said they strongly agreed which reflected a 6.25% increase compared to the responses given before the intervention began. However, 22% more students said they agreed with this survey question. There were 25.7% fewer of the students who indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. A little more than 11% more students said they disagreed while 0.7% indicated that they strongly disagreed.



Pre-Intervention Survey Data



Post-Intervention Survey Data

Figure 20. Pre- and post-intervention survey percentages of targeted students who indicated that they believed knowing English would help them understand Spanish better.

The post-intervention survey showed that 18.75% of the students noted that they strongly agreed with this statement and 37.5% noted they agreed. Those students who neither agreed nor disagreed was the same as those who strongly agreed, 18.75%. Approximately 13% both disagreed and strongly disagreed with this statement.

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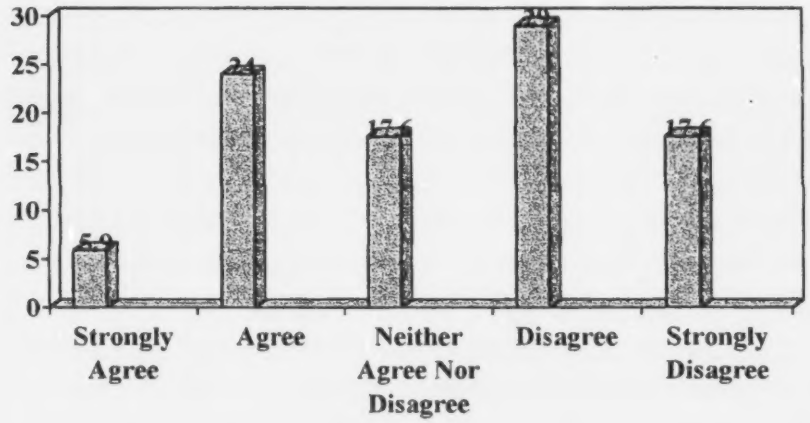
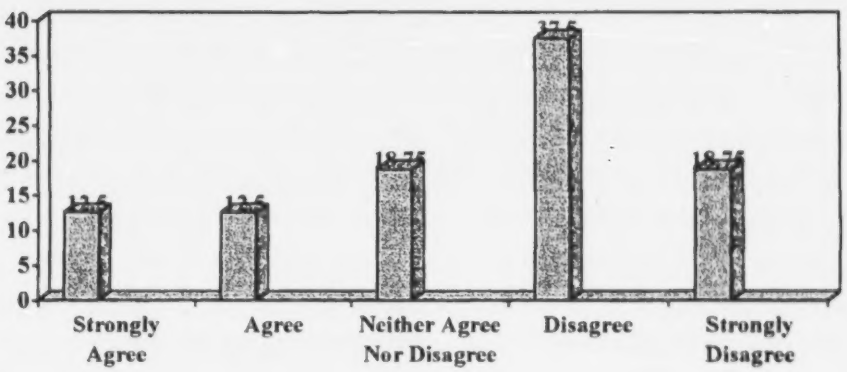
In the post-intervention survey 12.9% more student said they strongly agreed and 8.5% said they agreed with the idea the knowing English would help them understand Spanish better. There were 16.5% fewer students who said they disagreed and 11.5% fewer who said they strongly disagreed.



Pre-Intervention Survey Data



Post-Intervention Survey Data

Figure 21. Pre- and post-intervention survey percentages of students who believed that reading in Spanish would be easy because they knew strategies that would simplify the task.

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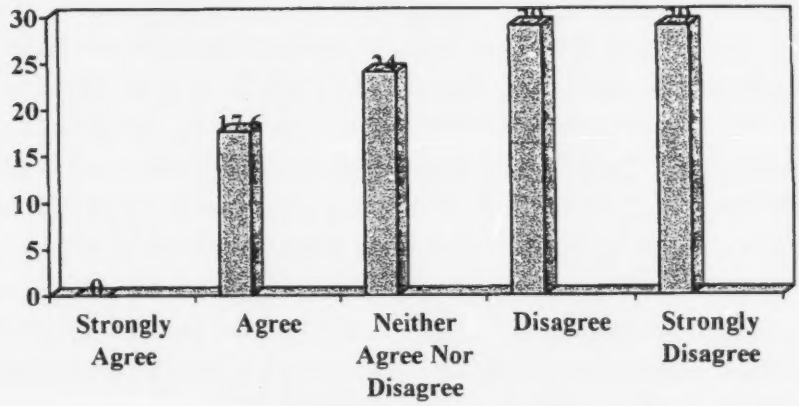
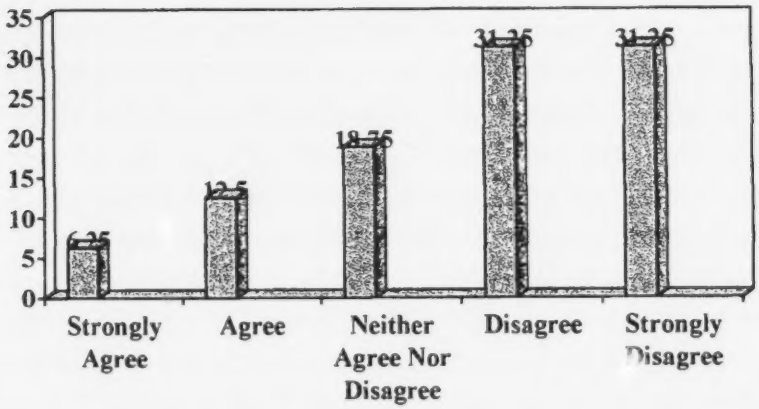
In the post-intervention survey data there were 6.6% more students who indicated that they strongly believed that reading will be easier, but there was 11.5% less who felt that they could agree with this idea. There was an increase in the number of students who responded that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Nearly 9% more of the students said they disagreed and 1% more said they strongly disagreed.



Pre-Intervention Survey Data



Post-Intervention Survey Data

Figure 22. Pre- and post-intervention survey percentages of students who indicated that they felt comfortable listening to Spanish and answering questions based on what they heard.

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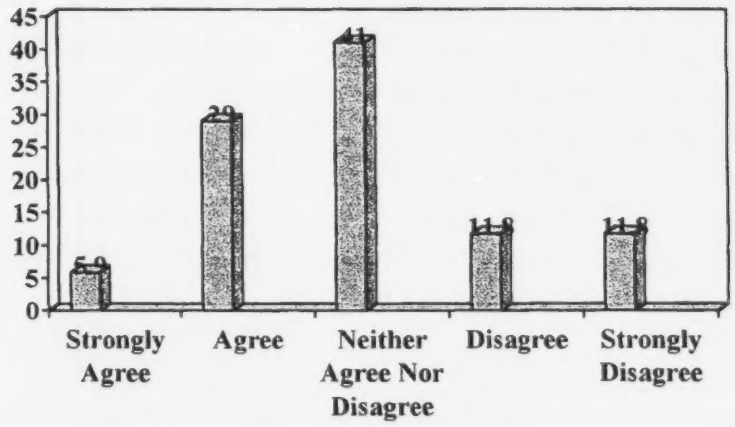
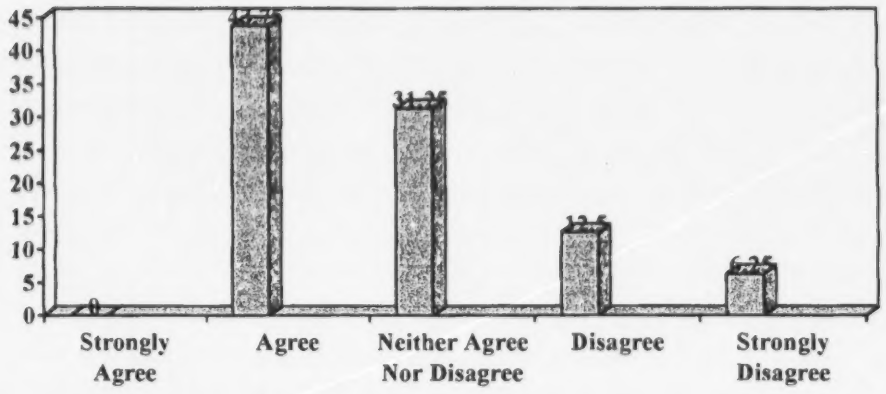
The post-intervention survey showed that 6.25% more students responded they strongly agreed, however there were more students who said they disagreed and strongly disagreed with this statement. Slightly more than 11% of the students said they both disagreed and strongly disagreed.



Pre-Intervention Survey Data



Post-Intervention Survey Data

Figure 23. Pre- and post-intervention survey percentages of targeted students who stated that when they listened to Spanish they could filter out information that they needed to listen.

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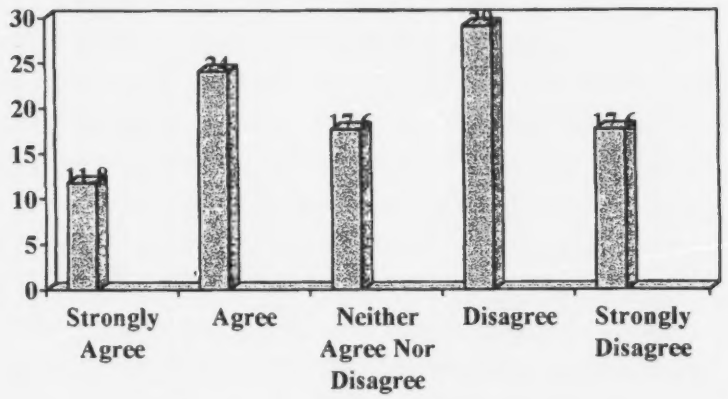
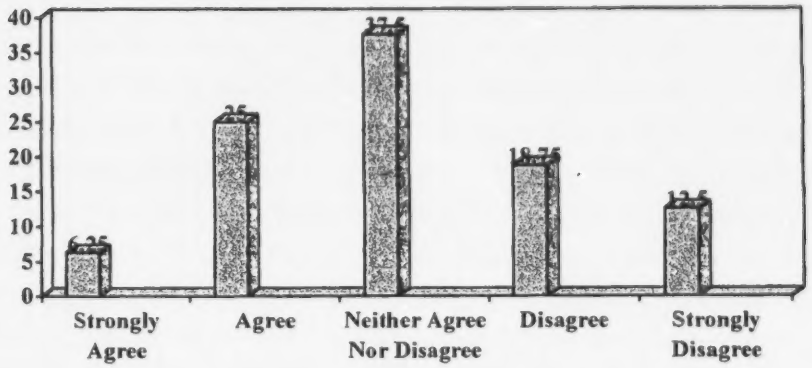
Compared to the pre-intervention survey, 5.9% fewer students said they strongly agreed that they could filter out information to listen. Students who said they agreed increased by 14.75%, and those who said they strongly disagreed decreased by 5.65%.



Pre-Intervention Survey Data



Post-Intervention Survey Data

Figure 24. Pre- and post-intervention survey percentages of targeted students who reported that if they had to speak Spanish they could use what they knew to communicate.

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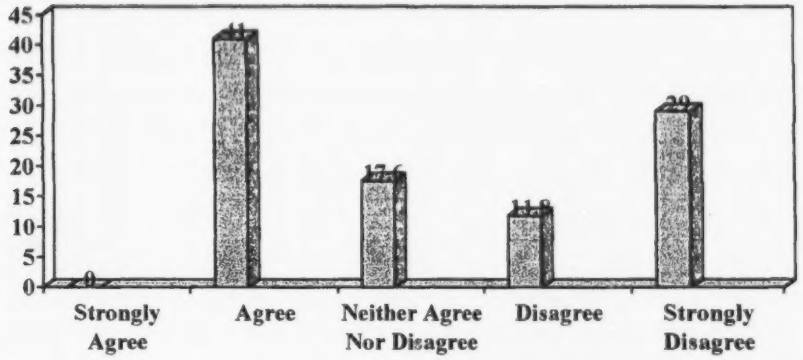
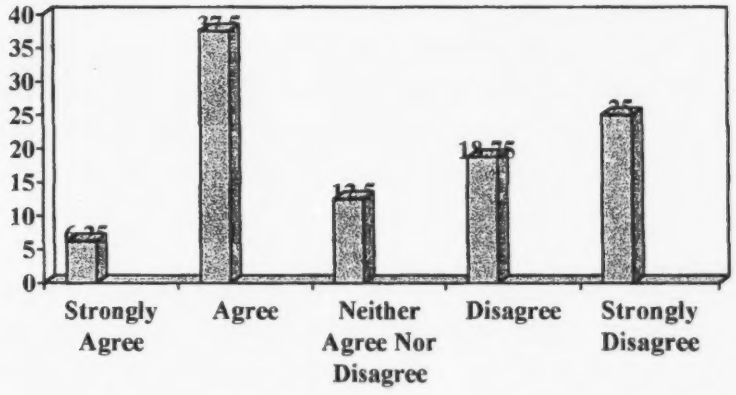
There was a decrease in the number of students who said they felt strongly about communicating well in Spanish compared to the pre-intervention survey. There were 5.5% fewer students who said they felt strongly about accomplishing this task well, while 1% more said they agreed they could handle this task well. On the other hand, 10.25% fewer students responded that they disagreed and 5.1% fewer said they strongly agreed that they could accomplish this.



Pre-Intervention Survey Data



Post-Intervention Survey Data

Figure 25. Pre-and post-intervention survey percentages of targeted students who believed they could write well in Spanish because they knew how to organize their thoughts and use the language they had learned.

The post-intervention survey showed a 6.25% increase in the number of students who felt strongly about organizing their thoughts in writing. There was an increase in the number of students who felt negatively about this strategy. Almost 7% more students indicated that they disagreed that they could do this

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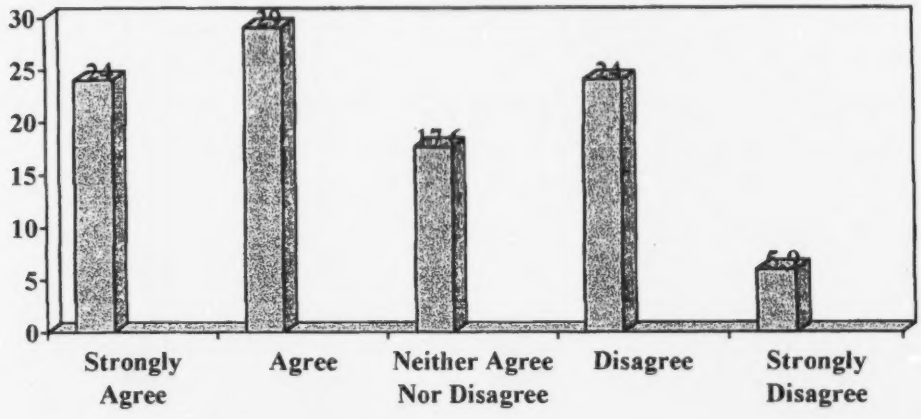
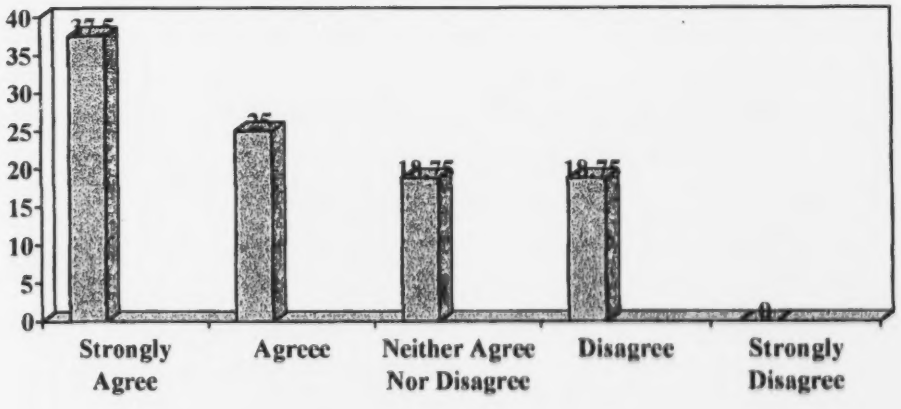
well, and only 4% fewer students said they strongly disagreed that they could write their thoughts in a well organized fashion.



Pre-Intervention Survey Data



Post-Intervention Survey Data

Figure 26. Pre and post-intervention survey percentages of targeted students who knew where to go for help if they needed additional practice or explanations.

The post-intervention survey results showed a 13.5% increase in the number of students who responded that they strongly agreed to this task yet 4%

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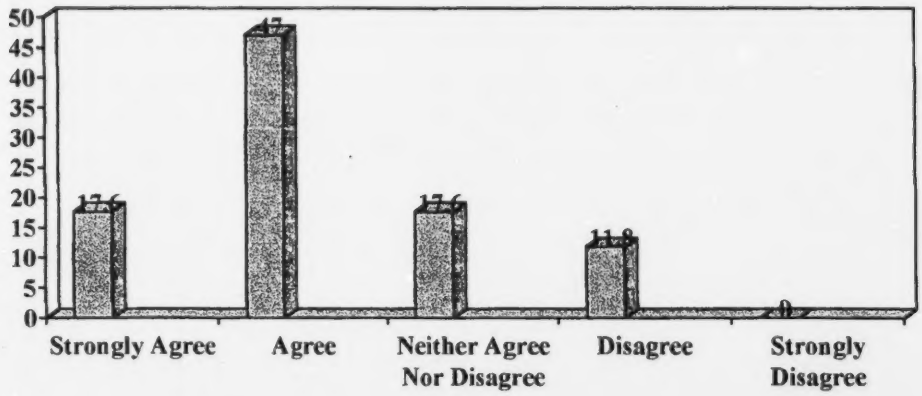
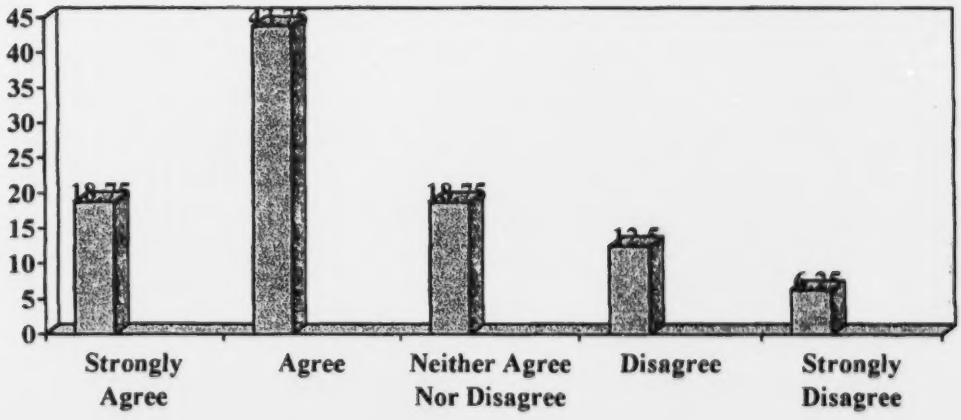
fewer said they agreed. There was a decrease of 5.9% of responses that indicated strongly disagreed.



Pre-Intervention Survey Data



Post-Intervention Survey Data

Figure 27. Pre-and post-intervention survey percentages of targeted students who believed that studying for Spanish would be much different from the way they prepared for other courses.

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The post-intervention data demonstrated a slight increase in the number of students who responded that they strongly agreed. Only 1.15% more students responded with this answer. Approximately 6.25% more said they strongly disagreed that their preparation in this course was different from their other courses.

Conclusions and Recommendations

As a researcher I would strongly recommend these interventions as a means of improving students' achievement in a foreign language class. I found these strategies helpful in assessing my student's progress with various aspects of foreign language learning. It allowed me to focus on specific needs of the students and to teach them how to take care of those needs. The various strategies allowed students opportunities to try learning a language in different ways and reflect on their progress with the strategies. Students became more comfortable with the various aspects of language learning with the use of these strategies.

The interventions allowed me to monitor the needs and concerns that my students had regarding their progress in learning Spanish. The assessments given allowed me to monitor their success with specific language strategies. Through the use of student journal entries I was able to see what students thought about the strategies and how useful they were for them to use. The observations made of students practicing the strategies in class allowed me to see if students could successfully complete these strategies on their own. Through the classroom observations made I learned that students could manage

these strategies individually if they needed to. I was also able to give students immediate feedback regarding their progress and answer any questions they had about the strategies.

Although these interventions proved to be successful, they required an enormous amount of time and planning, and it was difficult to maintain the current curriculum. The instruction of the strategies and completion of student journal entries needed to be carefully planned during the week to allow for other curricular activities. Reviewing the journal entries and tabulating data from the assessments also required the teacher's time. Organization was integral to relate the specific strategies with the curriculum in order to finish the research in a timely manner. During some weeks students learned about more than one strategy because the timing of the lesson allowed for it.

Implications for Teaching

During my years as a Spanish teacher I have noticed that many students who elect to take a foreign language are not adequately prepared with the skills they need to achieve success in the course. I felt it was important to make students aware that their preparation for a foreign language class would be different from other classes. I also wanted to provide students with good, effective strategies that they could utilize in my class and in other courses as well. I believe that I have completed this goal and have prepared my students well for their future years of language learning. I was satisfied to learn that students found the strategies as useful and effective as research has show them to be. Their journal entries provided me very interesting insights to the questions

and concerns they had regarding their language learning progress. I was surprised to read some of their suggestions and their willingness to use these strategies.

A student's success not only relies on effective language learning strategies but also on the student's effort and desire to do well. Even though not all the survey results or assessments reflect success or progress for all my students I would still continue to instruct these strategies. However students cannot expect to achieve good grades relying on these strategies alone. These strategies are supplemental behaviors students can use in addition to what they have learned. Students must do their part by studying to expect to achieve success with these strategies.

The language strategies taught this year addressed five aspects of language learning that are deemed most important: vocabulary, reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. All the strategies used were applied to activities or assignments given in class. Students were provided with a practical use of these strategies and applied them in various activities. Students recognized that these strategies were functional and even noted some additional situations when they may need to rely on them. When students were confused about how to handle a difficult part of language learning they were reminded of a skill to use to solve the problem. Students learned how to successfully problem solve their concerns about language learning. In the event that they have concerns in the future they can tap into these strategies to facilitate their learning.

As I finish this research I recognize that there is more to be done in regard to teaching effective language learning strategies. I feel a sense of accomplishment in giving my students more resources than I have in the past. I need to continue teaching my students different strategies to address their different learning styles. My students have a more refined perspective of language learning because they need to handle situations differently in Spanish class compared to others. This research allowed my students to metacognitively reflect on their progress and their use of language learning strategies.

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Appendix

Language Learning Strategies

Amanda Rybicki

Please take time to complete the following survey. The purpose of this survey is to evaluate your progress in class. Read the following questions and indicate your answer using the scale below. Please read the scale carefully.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

1. I understand the format of my text book and can find the information I need. I also have an idea of what I will learn this year. 5 4 3 2 1
2. I study my vocabulary outside of class and have different ways I can review the words. 5 4 3 2 1
3. I believe that knowing English will help me understand Spanish better. 5 4 3 2 1
4. I think reading in Spanish will be easy because I know strategies that will simplify the task. 5 4 3 2 1
5. I feel comfortable listening to Spanish and answering questions based on what I hear. 5 4 3 2 1
6. When I listen to Spanish I can filter out the information that I need to listen for. 5 4 3 2 1
7. If I had to speak Spanish I feel that I could use what I know to communicate. 5 4 3 2 1
8. I can write well in Spanish because I know how to organize my thoughts and use the language that I have learned. 5 4 3 2 1
9. If I needed additional practice or explanations I would know where to go for help. 5 4 3 2 1
10. I believe that studying for Spanish will be much different from the way I prepare for other courses. 5 4 3 2 1

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